



신의 노래

산경(山景)

현대판타지 소설

8 완결



주|라온 E&M

SONG OF GOD

-신의 노래-

- VOLUME 7 -

-AUTHOR-

San Kyung

Chapter 222

Danny and Colin were spread out on the sofa, drunk. Danny fell asleep after yelling that his violin needs to be in Colin's next album.

"Isaac asked how summer vacation in Switzerland sounds. You'll go, right?"

"No. I'm good. I should get back to Korea. I've rested long enough and my wish came true. There's nothing more I want since I've gotten maestros' numbers thanks to you." Yoon Kwang Hun stroked his phone in satisfaction.

"Reporters might go to the cafe to bother you. Will you be alright?"

"There won't be reporters coming to bother me after you do your interview. It seems like lawyer Lim So Mi threatened the Korean reporters."

"What? Lawyer Lim So Mi?"

"Yeah. She made it clear that anyone who bothers me won't be able to interview you ever again. It'll be okay."

Jun Hyuk mentioned the reporters because he wanted to spend some more time with Yoon Kwang Hun, but he could not change Yoon Kwang Hun's mind. "When will you be going?"

"I'm leaving tomorrow. I have the ticketing done already."

Next to Jun Hyuk, Amelia could not overcome the alcohol and kept dozing off. Yoon Kwang Hun saw this and smiled.

"Amelia still has time, right?"

"Yes. She goes back to Argentina after 10 days."

"Then enjoy your vacation with Amelia. And... don't forget what I said."

"Huh? What?"

“That you can only maintain affection through effort.”

“I see you really like Amelia.”

“I’m growing old alone, but I know a lot of women. It’s hard to find a girl like her. No matter how many women come at you, you’ll only think of Amelia later. Don’t regret it later on.”

“Don’t worry. I know well that Amelia is a great girl.”

Saying more would just be a sermon, so Yoon Kwang Hun just nodded.

“Go in. I’m sleepy, so I should get some sleep too.”

Jun Hyuk picked Amelia up as she was sleeping and went into the bedroom.



“Mr. Yoon. I hope we meet again.”

“I hope so too. Oh right. Amelia, it’d be great if you held a concert in Korea.”

“I’ll say. I’ll look into it. I’ll perform in Korea even if I don’t get paid for it.”

The New York Philharmonic’s show was a festival for them too. It is more enjoyable than a festival for people who find it hard to gather together.

Everyone went back to their respective places, and Jun Hyuk and Amelia were the only people left. While they were packing to go on vacation, President Stern came in laughing.

He was holding a stack of newspapers.

“Take a look at the culture section of the New York Times first. They filled a full 2 pages with our show. Especially articles about you, Jun.”

The culture pages were full of pictures of Jun Hyuk sitting in front of the piano and conducting.

“A conductor who must not be stolen away by someone else. That’s you. There are even

opinions that the New York Philharmonic needs to make a bold decision. Dimitri will get a little angry if he sees this article. It's the same as saying they should change to you. He he."

Jun Hyuk skimmed through all of the newspapers and looked indifferent, but he could not hide the laughter bursting out. There were a few negative articles, but they were all about sound issues with performing outdoors and not being able to handle the large crowds.

"Alright then. Leave the rest to me and you two relax in Switzerland. The scenery is the best, so you'll really like it."

"Isaac, you're not going with us?"

"I can't. I'm busiest during off-season. I need to work on renewing contracts and preparing concerts. Management in this industry is the same as in sports. Off-season is the busiest."

President Stern took a glance at Amelia and tapped senseless Jun Hyuk on the shoulder.

"And even if I have time, I can't go right now. Why would I when the two of you are spending some quality time together? You think I'm a senseless old man? Even if I go, it would be after Amelia leaves for Argentina."

"Tara left for her vacation?"

"I forced her to go. She's a workaholic too. If Amelia hadn't been here, I'm sure she would have followed you to Switzerland."

President Stern let out a long sigh thinking about Tara.

"There will be someone to greet you when you land in Switzerland. He'll take you to the villa and the house will have been cleaned up completely. Get a lot of rest before you come back."

The private jet left New York and arrived in Lucerne, Switzerland. President Stern's villa is a small 2-story house in Entlebuch, about an hour away from Lucerne.

Entrevuch is the first biological preservation area designated by UNESCO, a place of

nature at an elevation of 2,350m. There are endless rivers and forests that looked as though they have never been touched by humans, and it is just a small, beautiful village without a single large building.

The Swiss government blocks enterprises by law and made it a place where residents produce eco-friendly goods.

Large multinational chains were not allowed for hotels, and there are only small region-only operated hotels.

President Stern recommended a place that is perfect for Jun Hyuk's taste. As soon as Jun Hyuk saw the house, he smiled brightly and sat at a window on the 2nd floor for a while to look at the scenery, forgetting about his luggage.

Jun Hyuk and Amelia went grocery shopping and cooked for themselves, spending their days simply and calmly. They spent their days getting up late, eating a light breakfast, and taking walks through the grasslands and forests.

They spent their time in a perfect vacation, not thinking about piano or music scores and only thinking that they wished time would stop like this.

Amelia left after 10 days, but Jun Hyuk's daily life did not change. The rivers, forests, and grasslands acted as Jun Hyuk's friends and partners in place of Amelia.

When he went back to New York after spending a full month in Switzerland, President Stern and Tara were waiting for him with a thick stack of papers.

"First, we organized the places that requested concerts. Let's go through them carefully, pick the ones you want to do, and decide on an order for the rest." Jun Hyuk sighed looking at the stack of papers piled high.

"Isaac. I told you... I won't perform choral concerto anymore."

"I know. Choral concerto was taken out of all of these proposals."

"What? They were taken out? But, there's so many of them?"

"Do they request performances while looking at the works? They look at the person. Piano and conducting. Oh right. There's also a request for you to be a guest at the Monterey Jazz Festival at the end of September."

America's Monterey Jazz Festival was started in 1958 and has been held for a long time. It's one of the top 3 jazz festivals in the world, called 3M, along with Switzerland's Montreux and Canada's Montreal.

"Whew – So we have to read through all of these. Is there anything you want to suggest in particular?"

"There is one... Then, do you want to take a look at this one first?"

Tara exchanged looks with President Stern and handed a proposal over. Jun Hyuk read it and his eyes grew wide. "This is in Seoul."

"Yeah. It's a bit of a special place for you, no? But from just the management's stance, I want to give priority to the Seoul performance. The conditions are the best." President Stern spoke with confidence.

"The conditions are good?"

"Yeah. The guarantee is twice that of your performance this time around with New York. They said they'll hold a live broadcast and even guaranteed a revenue income... Other treatment is at VIP standard. From the agency's point of view, it's something that we don't want to miss out on."

Tara spoke quickly when she saw Jun Hyuk showing interest.

"And... ho ho. I found out recently too that Korea has organization in its cabinet for a Ministry of Culture. To think that there's a part of the government in charge of cultural affairs... I was surprised."

President Stern laughed as he spoke.

"Anyway, the proposal came with a request from the Ministry of Culture attached to it."

"Is there no designated department in America?"

"No. There isn't one organized in the government. Culture is all a private sector. The Department of Commerce handles anything that needs related measures."

In America, the two views that the government must not interfere in culture and that

culture is an industry coexist.

"Then, let's start with the performance in Korea."

When Jun Hyuk made a clear decision, Tara and Stern looked surprised. "It's really okay?"

"Yes, of course. There's no reason for me to be against it when my manager has analyzed it carefully and decided on it as priority."

"Great."

If the performance in Korea ends successfully, it is another chance to create a huge market for Jun Hyuk's album. It is a proposal that they cannot waste.

"But what's the description for the performance?"

"The proposal was interesting and it caught my eye too. There's an album you released before you came to the U.S., right?"

"Yes, but that's not classical."

"Yeah, I know that too. Performing that album and one piano concerto. So you participate in the piano concerto as a pianist and the tracks you made for your album are going to be put on stage. This will make it a 2-hour show. They said the stage is some kind of football stadium... It's an outdoor performance."

"Ah....."

Jun Hyuk picked the proposal up again and checked the location. It is Sangam World Cup Stadium.

"You need to arrange the music, too. Your tracks will be performed by the musicians who worked on the album with you and an orchestra. This is a concert too." The proposal says that it will be Seoul Symphony Orchestra.

"They want you to do the arrangements since they are songs from your album. What do you think?"

Jun Hyuk nodded lightly. Even if he is arranging the music, the orchestra is just an

accompaniment so it won't be difficult to do.

"And I'm telling you in advance in case you worry about it, but you won't be participating in anything other than the performance."

Tara added this note in to reassure Jun Hyuk.

"But won't we need at least 2 months to prepare for the concert in Korea?"

"Right. A week should be enough for rehearsals."

"Then that means I can participate in the Monterey Jazz Festival at the end of this month?"

Tara and Stern are taken aback.

"Why are you surprised? I thought you said there was an invitation?"

"Oh, I didn't think of that. I was thinking of promotion concerts because New York's performance and Laura's albums will be released next week." "Then, make a schedule for me including that concert."

Tara and Stern are even more surprised. Jun Hyuk seems a little different after getting back from vacation.

"What is this? Why are you working so hard all of a sudden?"

"I got a lot of rest, so I have to work."

They could only blink while looking at Jun Hyuk, who was smiling with a cup of coffee in his hand.

Chapter 223

Laura's album was released as a package including the scores for the 5 songs. Reviews like 'Extreme beauty shown by a human voice' were just regarding Laura Goldberg's debut album as a rookie, but the album sold quickly as an unexpected change to classical music.

The first promotional concert for the album was held in Carnegie Hall. Carnegie Hall has been praised with comments like "The hall itself is an instrument," and has been the representative temple for music in New York even after the construction of the Lincoln Center. It is a stage that all musicians, including those in pop music, dream of so it is not an exaggeration to say that the greatest musicians in the past 100 years have all stood on stage in Carnegie Hall.

599-seat Jenkins Hall in the basement is suitable for chamber music. Laura's solo recital will be held here and has been news since before the album's release. An aria without accompaniment or lyrics.

Tickets sold out early because of people who wanted to see this for themselves.

But, the people who entered the theater 30 minutes before the recital were in a state of confusion. There is a grand piano and classic guitar along with a microphone on top of the stage when it is supposed to be an aria without accompaniment.

When one spotlight turned on on stage and the audience lights went off, the audience's murmuring faded away. The sound of high heels clicking rang and Laura walked out wearing a blue dress.

Fitting for a small scale concert hall, light clapping welcomed the singer.

Laura stood in front of the microphone stand and started singing right away without any special words of greeting. An 'ah' sound rang through Jenkins Hall for 5 minutes. The sound did not stop for even a moment during those 5 minutes, making it suspicious as to whether she was even breathing.

The audience was drunk with the beautiful treble and melody, and those 5 minutes felt short to them. If the song had been longer, it would have been difficult for the

audience as well. They were all red in the face because they were following the singer's breath by holding their own.

When Laura finished one song, she bowed lightly to the audience and left the stage. The spotlight on stage went off but quickly came back on again. The thin ray of light shone on the piano.

The audience had been expecting Laura's re-entry, but cheered in surprise. Jun Hyuk walked out slowly wearing a suit, bowed to the audience, and sat in front of the piano.

The classic guitar next to the piano got the people more excited. This might be a rare performance where they might get to hear Jun Hyuk play the guitar after he plays the piano.

Jun Hyuk's right hand started moving and the same melody that Laura had just sang, flowed out. There is a clear difference between the piano and the human voice. Even the feeling of the music was different, and a low exclamation flowed through the audience.

People who enjoy a little more depth wished for Jun Hyuk's performance to continue not just because of the sound, but also because they could anticipate various emotions according to the way that the piano is played.

Jun Hyuk finished playing the piano and played the same song with the guitar. The distinctive smooth ringing of the classic guitar delivered inspiration of a different color.

Laura and Jun Hyuk did not say a word to each other and went back and forth taking turns to sing and play the piano and guitar. Each time the song changed, Laura's dress changed and the color of the lights changed.

There was even a song like a bolero, that presented the same melody with the colors of different instruments. But there was no concert or accompaniment on this stage, no variation, and it was only a melody with one color.

When all 5 songs were over, the audience in the concert hall could not shake the aftertaste of this strange experience, and could not stop yelling for an encore while clapping.

Laura came out again for the curtain call and took the microphone. "You were really

worked through for just 5 songs, right?" The audience burst out in laughter at Laura's joke.

"The person who created such a great piece with beauty and fun. Maestro Jun."

Jun Hyuk walked out on stage to Laura's introduction. Cheering filled the theater again with Jun Hyuk's entry.

"I realized today what a fun and delightful occasion it is to play a simple performance in a small scale theater."

Jun Hyuk sent a light greeting to the audience and the cheering quieted down.

"I played the piano and guitar for this performance. But it is fun to think about what instruments will appear for the recitals over the next 3 days including the 2nd round opening later tonight, and what kind of feeling those instruments will present."

The audience stirred. All the performance guide said was that it is Laura Goldberg's solo recital and that there is to be a special performance. But if it means that each recital is going to include solos with different instruments, these recitals have become an event that they cannot miss a single one of.

The audience only had thoughts of getting tickets for the remaining performances. "As it is the 1st performance, we will leave after giving you a special gift."

Jun Hyuk sat in front of the piano again and Laura stood in front of the microphone again.

The music that flows out of the piano is Jacques Offenbach's last opera, Barcarolle of 'Tales of Hoffman'. Offenbach died before he could complete this piece, so it remained unfinished.

It is called a living opera because producers and conductors can perform it with different context and configurations each time because it is unfinished.

The boating song is a duet in act 2, but Laura's voice and Jun Hyuk's piano mixed exquisitely and rang throughout the theater. This song in particular became a message in the movie 'Life is Beautiful' that showed how hope survives even in despair.

He snuck into the broadcasting room while in Auschwitz to play the song loudly over

speakers to let him wife and son know that he is alive.

The 2nd performance that night became news again because New York Philharmonic's bandmaster and lead violinist, Samuel Gilberto, took Jun Hyuk's role and played a sad violin melody.

Laura's 4 days of 8 performances was like a box of chocolates. There was more and more interest because just as it is impossible to know what flavor it is before taking the wrapper off, they could not know who the performer would be.

When news of Laura's first performance got out through the media, there were requests to hold more recitals and for sales of the record and scores. Laura's performance was a user's guide showing people how to develop Jun Hyuk's 5 songs.



"Jun. You're not thinking of a solo performance for Monterey Jazz Festival, are you?"

"Of course not. I don't even have a band."

"I was asking just in case. The festival committee sent this, and there are 2 things that they want."

The document that President Stern showed him listed participating in Clarke and Lee L. Carlton's joint performance and playing the piano as part of European Jazz Big Band's performance.

"Isaac. Big Band rehearsals will be no joke."

Jazz Big Band has over 20 people and is not much different from an orchestra. They need to perform with perfect configuration and it is hard to expect improvisation. But the fine performance that Big Band presents is another flavor of jazz.

"I can just do the Stanley Clarke and Lee L. Carlton joint performance, right?"

"Of course."

President Stern grinned when he saw Jun Hyuk smile.

“I see you’re happy to be meeting Stanley Clarke again?”

“That’s good, but I’m really looking forward to standing on stage with Lee L. Carlton, too. It’s rare to find guitarists who can follow through with such clean and well-presented phrases as he can.”

“Great. Then, I’ll tell the festival committee that. And... the performance in Korea.”

“Yes.”

“We’re trying to prepare for a live album. What do you think?”

President Stern is asking about the album because he cannot make a determination on Korean musicians. He has heard enough of Seoul Symphony’s performances through albums, but all he knows about the musicians who participated in Jun Hyuk’s 1st album is that one album itself.

Jun Hyuk thought for a moment and then nodded.

“It’ll be okay. Each individual’s abilities are great. There won’t be anything bad to say even if the album comes out. Oh right. I don’t know how those musicians have changed since then... so I’m sure we’ll have to check that.”

Jun Hyuk spoke confidently, but President Stern shook his head.

“Jun. I’m not thinking of the Korean market when I talk about the album, but the global market. We’re even thinking of changing the lyrics to English. That’s why the participating musicians need to be up to standard for the global market.”

If they substitute the musicians and change the lyrics to English, it will become a completely new album. Then the people who participated in the 1st album lose all rights to this performance.

“We can take session men from here if we need to. And for the singers.....”

“Yes. How many were there? Various people sang on the album.”

“I know. I’m thinking of picking the singers separately.”

“What? You’re going to change them?”

It does not mean that he will see what the Korean singers are like now, before making a decision. President Stern did not want the Korean singers in the first place.

“Of course. We need to take people who are fitting for the global market. Oh, don’t take it the wrong way. I’m not saying that I can’t trust those Korean singers. It’s just that the singers need to be world stars when thinking about album sales. This is with keeping marketing in mind.”

Jun Hyuk looked at President Stern for a moment and laughed as he spoke. “Isaac.”

“Yeah.”

“From now on, you don’t need to explain all sorts of things to me or ask my opinion. You can just tell me what I need to do, whether that’s a stage or studio. Anything is fine. And you can do whatever you want for the people I will be performing with.”

President Stern was speechless at Jun Hyuk’s unexpected words. He fully understands what Jun Hyuk is saying. Jun Hyuk is not talking about the efficiency of the work they do, but that he trusts him.

When President Stern spoke again, he was smiling brightly.

“Fine. Then, I’ll have to really work you hard from now on. I’m going to treat you like a slave. Ha ha.”

Chapter 224

John Steinbeck, famous for 'The Grapes of Wrath,' was from Monterey peninsula, the oldest city in California. It has cliffs and sand dunes formed through waves and winds and a coast covered in rocks.

Monterey once flourished but traces of it can only be found in museums. Now, it is only a symbol of John Steinbeck and the 3 day 2 night jazz festival.

The jazz festival opens at Monterey Fairgrounds on a total of 8 stages with more than 500 famous jazz artists participating from Friday night at 6 to midnight and over the weekend from 11 in the morning to midnight. They offer soul-stealing melodies for almost 12 hours.

2 jazz greats were having a glass of wine early in the morning in a studio in LA, in order to participate in the festival.

"Trust me. You can just leave it to where Jun's piano leads. Then, I'm telling you that time passes really quickly."

"It's to that point? Listening to the album, it felt like it was your bass that was leading the music."

"That's the really fascinating thing about it. When you play with Jun, you lose a sense of who is leading whom. And when you look at him, you can tell that he's forgetting where he is and is just lost in the music."

Stanley Clarke recalled the day that he spent a great time lost in jazz with Jun Hyuk.

"But, look at the result. I was the only one running with it and Jun's piano matched the balance perfectly."

"Isn't he the type to calculate everything when he performs? Like me?"

Lee Carlton is a fusion jazz musician who mixes rock into his music, rather than playing traditional free jazz. His style was to add a little improv into completed music rather than performing in improv. So, he plays music that is easy for anyone to fall for,

even those who are not jazz fanatics.

"No. Jun told me after we played that he tasted the first peak moments."

"Then, does that mean his ears are just open? Regardless of his will?"

"He isn't called a genius for nothing. Honestly, no matter how others call us genius musicians, we know. We laid our abilities as a base and got here through effort. But that's not

the case for Jun. Every single cell in his body is made with talent." Stanley Clarke kept praising Jun Hyuk.

"Anyway, do as I say. Jun will bring out the potential in you that you didn't even know about."

As the two men slowly got drunk, Jun Hyuk opened the studio door and stuck his head in."

"Oh my God! Jun!"

"Stanley!"

Stanley Clarke put his wine glass down and hugged Jun Hyuk.

"It's been a really long time, hasn't it? Every time I performed in New York, you were abroad."

"Is that so? Are you sure you didn't come when I wasn't there on purpose? Ha ha."

They have only met once but shared a precious experience that left them as though they are friends forever, so there are no walls of skin color, age, knowledge, or meetings between the two of them.

"When did you get here? You should have called in advance."

"I just got here. I'm coming here directly from the airport."

Stanley Clarke was so glad to see Jun Hyuk again that he forgot Lee Carlton was next to him. When he saw Jun Hyuk smile as he saw Lee Carlton approaching them, he

snapped his finger as he spoke,

“Oh right. Look at me. It’s the first time you two are meeting, right?”

“Mr. Carlton, it’s an honor.”

Lee Carlton took the hand that Jun Hyuk held out to him and shook it.

“Leave the Mr. out. You can just call me Lee. Is it okay if I just call you Jun? Or do I have to say Maestro Jun? Ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk remembered the picture on the album cover he released 25 years ago. A gentle, manly, and handsome young man has become a middle aged man with thinned out blonde hair.

Stanley Clarke handed Jun Hyuk a glass of wine as well, and complimented him on all of his accomplishments since the last time they saw each other.

“I felt like a fool because I had been so happy thinking that the next jazz god had appeared. I almost pushed Beethoven to go on the path of jazz. It’s a good thing we haven’t met since that day.”

“The most thrill I felt while in the U.S. was when I was performing with you. I didn’t even get that feeling when I was conducting the New York Philharmonic.”

“Really? Then, let’s forget all of this about being a maestro and go on a playing tour with me. What do you think?”

“Well... You don’t know me yet. Both are possible. He he.”

“What? You lost all of your modesty ever since you picked up a baton? Ha ha.”

The 3 of them joked around and kept drinking wine. When the new bottle of wine was about to be empty, they started discussing the performance approaching them.

“You know the performance schedule?”

“Yes. From Saturday at 5 in the afternoon. I heard that it’s an hour and a half. Did you decide on a repertoire?”

“No, not yet. We waited to pick with you.”

Lee Carlton looked at Jun Hyuk, who was a little flushed because of the alcohol.

“Is there something you like about my music?”

“I didn’t hear everything to the live performances, but I know everything that was released in an album. I did watch the live performances that weren’t included on albums through

YouTube, but not all of them. Anyway, I don’t know if I can ask this, but I would like to perform

Early A.M. Attitude and Room with you.”

Jun Hyuk said the 2 songs he likes most out of Lee Carlton’s.

“Of course, it’s okay. Those 2 songs can be played on the piano too. Your piano will make them shine.”

“Oh right. I should have told you in advance, but I wanted to play the guitar this time instead of the piano. What do you think?”

“The guitar?”

“Right. I was forgetting that Jun’s great at the guitar too. Ha ha.”

Lee Carlton was surprised by mention of Jun Hyuk’s guitar, but Stanley Clarke cut in.

After making the decision to play the guitar, Jun Hyuk also worked with the men to select their repertoire. Stanley Clarke and Lee Carlton wanted to arrange the songs on Jun Hyuk’s rock tribute album, but Jun Hyuk shook his head.

“I decided to participate in this festival because I wanted to perform your songs. I don’t want to arrange my songs and perform them.”

They chose 8 of the two greats’ songs and then decided on the order. And they also planned to play more than 6 songs at the least even if the improv performance got too long.

"Then, shall we do 2 songs lightly? It'll give us a chance to listen to your guitar. That's okay, right?"

Lee Carlton felt rushed because he wanted to hurry up and hear this young genius' music.

"I'm always up for it."

"Let's go really lightly. It's hard to even hold up my guitar because I feel drunk."

Stanley Clarke made a fuss as he put the heavy bass on his shoulder. Jun Hyuk picked the Gibson of the guitars laying around the studio, and started tuning it.

Stanley Clarke's bass guitar started dinging and a light guitar riff came from Lee Carlton's guitar for the first song, Room 335.



When they were done playing Room 335, the alcohol almost completely wore off from Lee Carlton, Stanley Clarke, and the drummer was hiding the sweat on his forehead.

Even though the drummer who will be performing with them is a skilled drummer who has a great sense of rhythm and a sturdy foundation, he felt like they had played for over an hour when they had just played one song.

The drummer looked down at his watch and understood why he felt like that. 25 minutes had flashed before their eyes.

Stanley Clarke shook his head and laughed, but Lee Carlton looked blank like the drummer.

Jun Hyuk alone looked refreshed as he drank water.

"Lee. You know what I meant before? Whew....."

Lee Carlton did not hear Stanley Clarke's words. He had only one thought since they finished playing.

The First!

The title of the album that Stanley Clarke recorded with Jun Hyuk.

The First did not indicate the first time they met, or their anticipation for the next meeting.

Pleasure regarding music that they experienced for the first time. That is what the title is showing.

He has never played like this before. Pleasure of jazz? Spontaneity of improvisation? Unity of a perfect ensemble? He has seen this before. He would not be considered a jazz great or legend if he had not had such experiences.

But the pleasure he just experienced while playing with Jun Hyuk is a different kind of pleasure.

A feast of endless melodies.

What would this kind of melody be like? Should we try a melody like this? It had felt like someone was whispering things like this into his ear. New phrases, melodies, and fun codes kept buzzing around his head. Lee Carlton only picked at his guitar strings as he thought of it.

When the melody inside his head stopped, 25 minutes had passed.

Stanley Clarke put the bass guitar down, plopped down on the sofa, and lit a cigar.

He took a long pull, let out white smoke, and looked at Lee Carlton standing in front of him.

“What are you doing? You want to do another song? Then, you two do it. I’m so tired I can’t.”

Lee Carlton finally came to his senses and leaned on the sofa.

“At this rate, we won’t be able to do 3 songs, much less 6.”

“It’s hard during the performance. They could at least appreciate it if it’s an indoor performance. It’s outside though... The audience will be so tired that they fall away first.” The drummer had not said much until now, but spoke up cautiously.

“I don’t think that this kind of performance is fitting for a stage either.”

Jun Hyuk put down his guitar as well, and agreed with the drummer’s opinion.

“Then, let’s try playing together again after adjusting our conditions. We’ll figure out when to cut the 8 songs too.”

Stanley Clarke had just been looking at Lee Carlton, and looked to Jun Hyuk.

“Jun, you must be tired from flying. What do you think about going to your hotel to rest?”

Let’s really have a drink after rehearsals tomorrow.”

Stanley Clarke laughed as he winked, and Jun Hyuk nodded.

“Yes. Then I’ll come back at noon tomorrow. You should both get a lot of rest too.”

Lee Carlton could not shake the shock so much that he did not hear Jun Hyuk or realize that he left. Stanley Clarke watched him as he lit a cigarette and handed it over.

He took 2 puffs and let the rest burn before he finally snapped out of his blank state.

“Stanley. Is this the talent that you were talking about? That he can find balance perfectly?”

“No. It wasn’t to this point when we were recording together. He changed a lot in the time we haven’t seen each other. Ah, is it because of his experience conducting an orchestra?”

“Stanley. I’m not thinking wrong, am I? That kid Jun just dragged us around and made us play, right?”

“Of course. Was there ever a time it was like this when it was just the two of us playing?”

There’s an instantaneous change when Jun joins us. Then it’s because of Jun.”

It is not something he wants to believe, but it has already happened and his whole body remembers it. It is not something that he can deny.

“How is this possible? Letting the people he is playing with the melody... no, he made us realize it. I can’t believe it.”

Stanley Clarke only smoked the cigar, and did not respond. He wanted to give a refreshing response if he could explain it. But even if he knew what has happened, he does not know how to explain it.

“There’s one thing that’s certain. Jun conducted the 3 of us as though conducting an orchestra. He showed us how to play and how to progress. Jun’s guitar melody was the baton.

We just played the way he told us to.”

“Is that possible? Is it possible for a song that we haven’t practiced before with new melodies and phrases that we don’t know and were just brought out?”

“Why are you asking me that? You experienced it for yourself. And... I told you, didn’t I? That he would bring out the potential in you that you didn’t even know about. Of course I didn’t know that we’d be able to prove what I said so soon.”

Stanley Clarke could not hide his dazed expression either. A few years ago, Jun Hyuk was a young pianist with tremendous talent. Now, though, he has become an unimaginable monster.

Chapter 225

“What did you think? How was it to meet your childhood idol in person?” Tara smiled as she spoke in the car to the hotel.

“The Lee Carlton I know is the Lee Carlton from 20 years ago. The feeling I get from taking a time machine to go back 20 years. He’s totally different now because he has a subtle mellowness. How should I put it? I think he’s become much more relaxed and gentle.”

Jun Hyuk compared Lee Carlton from when he was young to his image now. It was a great decision to participate in the Monterey Jazz Festival. He cannot explain in words the pleasure he felt when he went into the midst of music as melodies of different instruments mixed.

He laid himself down on the hotel bed, but he could not fall asleep. He was not very tired and he kept thinking about how they would play the 8 songs during rehearsal tomorrow.

The next day, Jun Hyuk picked up a lot of coffee and went to the studio, but felt uncomfortable at the strange way Lee Carlton was looking at him.

Lee Carlton finally spoke up after they just played 3 or 4 songs consecutively without another preparation in particular.

“Jun. Well this is... I can’t hold back. Let’s talk for a moment.”

Stanley Clarke smiled. He knows that Lee Carlton, who is known for his sophisticated performances, cannot just let it go. He has been very patient even until now.

“What on earth did you do yesterday? Why did our performance flow like that?”

“Excuse me? Yesterday? Oh... That?”

Jun Hyuk scratched his head because of the difficult question.

“Um... That’s because I’m a huge fan of you two...”

“What? Fan? What does that have to do with the performance?”

“I just matched it to the way you play because I know it well. And adequate stimulus? That’s the only way I can explain it. To put it simply, it’s a feeling. A feeling that should I play like this, then you will accept it like this?”

When Jun Hyuk could not explain it properly, Stanley Clarke looked at Lee Carlton.

“See. I told you that you wouldn’t be able to get a refreshing answer even if you ask. How could a talent he was born with be explained?”

This showed the difference between the two men.

Stanley Clarke is more prominent in the talent he was born with compared to Lee Carlton who is such a hard worker that his mantra might as well be,

It seems that Stanley Clarke understands a little more that talent that one is born with is difficult to explain in words.

“Are you saying that you can’t explain music?”

“I think you can just understand it as a synergy effect.”

“Synergy effect... I’m sure you don’t know why that synergy only comes out dramatically when performing with you, right?”

Jun Hyuk just scratched his head with an uncomfortable expression, and Lee Carlton did not ask any more questions, laughing. He is a talent who has already heard that he is Beethoven at the age of 21 and has released a song that is called a milestone in classical music.

When he was in his 20s, he enrolled at USC to receive a more systematic and deeper education. He listened to lectures like that of Christopher Parking and fell more and more into the unfathomable world of the guitar. It is an incomparable talent in the first place.

He just thought that the more they dug into a primitive and deep place, the more he would hear things that he could not understand.

“Alright. Then shall we start again? Oh right, Jun. Did you know that the entire

Monterey performance is recorded?" "Yes, I know that."

"That's really different from recording a classical performance. Classical is filmed from a distance through zooming, but in this case, the cameraman is on the stage and sticking his camera in your face." "Oh, I see."

Something he saw in performance videos – cameramen moving more busily than the performers themselves. They film not just the face, but also the fingers that guilt through the guitar neck.

"Of course they do it well enough that they don't interfere with the performance, but it is true that you'll pay attention to it. There are times when the camera wires and cameraman's movement gets in the way. Just make sure you take it all in during the last rehearsal on stage."

Jun Hyuk nodded and put his hand on the guitar strings. They started playing the 8 songs that they chose. They enjoyed the flavor of jazz with a little change each time.



There were already large outdoor stages all over Monterey Fairgrounds. Each stage has a large screen and another screen installed at a distance so that people can check the situation of any stage at any time.

With snack corners and restaurants for 1.5 million people to eat and drink for 2 nights 3 days, the concert hall was another village inside Monterey. People had already started to gather on Thursday, the day before the festival.

They found spots in front of the performances they each wanted to see and listened to audios of jazz music as they waited. Their waiting throughout the night is another free part of jazz.

Big Band started in the LA club scene and became famous throughout the U.S. enough to go on a world tour after entering Hollywood. The Monterey Jazz Festival started with their opening for the 'Brian Setzer Orchestra'.

'Brian Setzer Orchestra' is the best American jazz orchestra as a regular guest at the White House, with 9 nominations at the Grammy Awards.

Emeli Sande and John Legend's opening stage began for the 2nd performance, and prominent musicians like Jackson Browne, The Chemical Brothers, Tony Bennett and Santana, Lenny Kravitz, James Blake, and Aloe Blacc took over 8 stages to fill Monterey Fairgrounds with music.

Crowds of tens of thousands of people surged to each stage and got drunk on the music of the jazz, blues, and rock greats. Jun Hyuk was one of those people as well.

"Jun, what are you talking about! What are you going to do about the performance if something happens and you get hurt? You can meet the musicians you like. Why do you want to be in the midst of the audience..."

"Tara. Jazz and rock music is different from classical, which you listen to calmly while sitting down. It's a festival. Half of jazz and rock music is the stage and the other half is the enthusiastic audience below. I mean that's how you enjoy it properly."

Tara did not hide her anxiety when Jun Hyuk was leaving the hotel early in the morning in casual clothing.

"And you should go out and have fun too. You like music. There are a lot of people in Korea who can't come to this jazz festival even if they want to. You're lucky compared to those people."

Tara quickly got changed and followed Jun Hyuk out.

"Don't even think about following me around at the venue. If that's what you want to do, you should just rest in the hotel. It won't be easy to find me in a place with over 1 million people."

Even with Tara's wrangling, Jun Hyuk wandered around the venue among countless people and cheered as another fan.

There were the occasional people who approached Jun Hyuk in disbelief to confirm his identity, but all he had to do was lightly shake his head. It is an advantage that people are unable to distinguish between faces of people of other races.

"Look here. You really aren't? I think you are."

"I'm telling you I'm not. If I really were that Jun, you think I'd be crazy to be here? I could be enjoying all of this backstage."

A young man standing next to him asked him persistently.

“I’m telling you I live in New York. I’m sure I saw your face on placards and posters during the New York Philharmonic performance. I think you look too much the same to say that you just look similar because you’re both Asian.”

The man who says he is from New York, handed Jun Hyuk a can of beer and did not give up.

“Tall, thin, and curly hair. It’s the same.”

Jun Hyuk took the beer, took a sip, and wiped his mouth with his hand.

“Is every tall Asian with curly hair Jun? Say something that makes sense. Thanks for the beer, but stop. The performance is starting.”

Latin rock great, Carlos Santana’s 2007 single “Into the Light” flowed out. He stopped caring about the man’s bothersome attention.

Jun Hyuk went back to the hotel after midnight and threw his body on the bed. It is much more tiring to be part of the audience than it is to be the performing musician.

Chapter 226

"Think of us as people who don't exist. There won't be any reason for us to get in your way while you perform. You bump into the camera more as you pay more attention to it."

Jun Hyuk listened to the cameraman's friendly explanation as he went into sound check with the other 2 musicians. A lot of people were already gathered below the stage, holding up their phones and recording the musicians they love.

"Look here! Jun! Jun! Hey, Maestro! Do you remember me? I gave you a beer yesterday.

You're the person I watched the Santana performance with yesterday, right?"

Someone was yelling from the bottom of the audience at the guard line as security held him back. Jun Hyuk turned at mention of a beer and saw the young man who had given him a beer yesterday.

"Ha ha. I've gotten caught. Thanks for the beer yesterday."

The man frowned once Jun Hyuk confirmed for him who he is. It is a pity that he lost the chance to get a signature and take a picture together.

Jun Hyuk put his guitar down and took off the t-shirt he was wearing. He signed his name in big letters on the shirt and gave it to a security guard below, saying,

"This isn't a lot, but it's for the beer. I don't know if it's okay because it's not an expensive shirt."

The young man took the shirt from Jun Hyuk and howled.

"And look closely. I'm not that skinny."

He flexed his bare body, but the man just laughed at him. The young man who got Jun Hyuk's shirt, took his shirt off and threw it to Jun Hyuk. Jun Hyuk saw the man's body and quickly put the shirt on. He had just confirmed that he is skinny again.

After laughing for a while, he went into rehearsal for 3 songs. They practiced enough and jazz does not always follow the flow of rehearsals, so it was fine to do just 3 songs.

Jun Hyuk returned backstage and drank the water that Tara handed him.

"Jun. You look really comfortable today. You feel really different."

"I need to enjoy the festival. Today's goal is to make people have fun, not to present completed music."

Stanley Clarke was listening to Tara and Jun Hyuk's conversation when he laughed as he spoke,

"I'm really nervous, but you're really relaxed."

"Stanley, why are you nervous? You've done a lot of performances like this."

"Oh... Well... I'm always nervous when faced with a stage."

Stanley Clarke was taken aback and gave an evasive answer. When his face even flushed a little, Jun Hyuk had a strange thought.

Is he worrying that he might bring out improv that they had not practiced during rehearsals?

"We are starting in 10 minutes. Everyone, please get ready."

He did not continue his thoughts because of the staff member's loud voice. The 3 performers waved their hands as they walked out on stage.

When they walked out, loud cheering shook the stage. Stage 1 is the biggest stage, so it had the largest number of spectators. It seemed that there were easily over 20,000 people standing so close together.

His hand trembled as he looked down at the endless amount of people rippling in a crowd. It was a different experience to feel the pressure of a tremendous number of people through his body.

"What do you think? Incredible, huh? You'll automatically relax once you start playing."

Don't worry."

Lee Carlton laughed as he patted Jun Hyuk's shoulder and walked by. Then Stanley Clarke came.

"The first song is a gift from us, so we hope you like it."

"Excuse me?"

Stanley Clarke turned away without even listening to Jun Hyuk, and the bass guitar started ringing without any signal. It is a rhythm he never heard during rehearsals. What song are they going to play?

Jun Hyuk had no choice but to put his hand on his guitar and wait for a signal.

But as soon as he heard Lee Carlton's guitar, he was taken aback and his eyes grew wide.

His guitar melody is one that Jun Hyuk is very familiar with – his own song. The first song "Ah" of "A, E, I, O, U" is flowing out of the large speakers, filling the large venue.

The rhythm and speed was a little different and with Stanley Clarke's bass, it became a complete guitar song and hit Jun Hyuk's ears. A short while later, a light snare drum and high hat cymbal joined and it became jazz.

That is when Jun Hyuk laughed, loosened his fingers, and enjoyed the amazing gift of his music.

The audience was surprised because it is overly elegant for jazz performance, but everyone's shoulders started moving once the drum's light rhythm came in.

When did they arrange and practice this song? When Jun Hyuk imagined the two elderly gentlemen sleeping less and practicing in secret in order to surprise him, he found it funny and touching. He could also understand why Stanley Clarke had been nervous backstage.

Their arrangement was great. The light rhythm, appropriate tempo, and dramatic melody brought the audience's spirits up. He could dimly hear the sound of Stanley and Lee giggling.

"How many days did you practice this?"

"Why? Don't you like it? We had a pretty rough time of arranging this."

"Let's do the evaluation after the performance. Tens of thousands of fans are waiting."

Jun Hyuk laughed at Lee Carlton and then started picking out the melody of the first song on his guitar. The first verse of 'Room 335' came out through the large amps, but the roaring sound of the audience cheering swallowed the sound of Jun Hyuk's guitar.

Once they performed Lee Carlton's famous Room 335 and Early A.M. Attitude, 20 minutes had quickly gone by. They continued with varying music, keeping the time as they had promised and practiced.

While Lee Carlton showed an overall tight performance, Jun Hyuk showed the effect of contrast with a very fast and passionate performance. Stanley Clarke's bass fingering, which at times feels cold, worked like a gear with the drums without a single error.

Lee Carlton's solo in the typical ballad style brought a cool feeling and Jun Hyuk's languid and lazy guitar melody made small veins quiver.

The next song was lively to break people out of their relaxed states. The dull and dark atmosphere characteristic of jazz was nowhere to be found. With the two guitarists' jumping melody and the bass' heavy and cold rhythm. The drums even show a sturdy configuration without any mistakes.

When Lee Carlton started to repeat the rock music's guitar riff he likes to use, Jun Hyuk started a melody that led with a long breath. If Lee Carlton showed masculinity with precise and strong intervals, Jun Hyuk's guitar was bringing out a sad melody like Laura's aria.

White, black, and Asian. Entirely different emotions flowed through the 3 people's DNA, but it is true that there is no race or ethnicity in music. The different emotions of the 3 people fused well through music and brought out the best chemical reaction. That surprising result brought in more people of Fairgrounds. As the performance went on, people kept gathering to Stage 1.

Countless spectators were in a frenzy over the one power penetrating the entire performance. 2 guitars and 1 bass play in breathtaking ad lib as though fighting each

other, and that melody is the essence of jazz and the power that made the people's blood boil.

A single jazz album. And that was with the piano and not the guitar. Jun Hyuk disappeared into the classical world with a symphony after that, but this performance showed his abilities as a guitarist.

With this, it was a precious moment for jazz manias to have discovered another outstanding guitarist.



"Today was comparatively okay, right? I didn't even do anything ungainly like being narcissistic and getting lost in my own music."

Jun Hyuk changed out of his sweat-drenched shirt backstage and was satisfied with his moderated performance.

"Today's show was good. The performance was amazing, too. But it was music with a lot of regrets. Don't you think so?"

Stanley Clarke spoke to Lee Carlton and not Jun Hyuk, who is satisfied with the show.

"I still have a fresh memory of my first time performing with Jun, so of course I'm left with a lot of regrets. If it hadn't been a stage where we had to show a variety of songs, I really would have performed however I wanted to."

While the managers packed up the instruments, the 2 men smoked cigarettes and discussed their regrets regarding the music. Jun Hyuk watched them and put down the water he was drinking.

"Then shall we have a festival of our own? It'll be cozy."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Let's go back to the studio and play however we want to like we did last time. Without restrictions on time or song configuration. What do you think?"

The 2 men's eyes sparked at Jun Hyuk's proposal. They each rushed their managers.

The managers quickly packed the guitars and ran to get the cars ready.

"Tara. I'm going to stop by the studio first, so you go rest at the hotel. I'll call you when we're done."

"Alright. I'll finish up preparations to go back to New York tomorrow, so have fun." When Jun Hyuk got into Lee Carlton's car, Lee Carlton took his cellphone out.

"Jun. I don't know what'll happen, so I'm going to record everything. Okay?"

"Yes, of course. I want to keep the time I spend with the two of you as well."

Lee Carlton called the studio on his phone. He told them to set everything up perfectly to record multiple times.

The 3 people arrived at the studio and were more excited as they set up their guitars and amps than they had been during the show. This is a secret show that they are doing for themselves and not for others.

"It was incredible when you performed my song during the show. I can't forget it so... what do you think about trying that?"

"That'd be great."

"Did you by chance hear the rest?"

"Of course. We heard all of it."

The 2 men sent the okay signal with their fingers.

"Then I'll start with those 5 songs as the theme. Come in when you feel it's right. I'll mix all 5 of the songs, so let's run with it all we want."

The 2 greats saw that Jun Hyuk was excited like a child and were nervous at the words that they can run with it. They first worried if they could keep up with him if he went along as he pleased.

Lee Carlton turned and spoke to the sound engineer,

"Jimmy. Press the record button now and go rest. Don't come back into the studio until

I contact you."

Once the engineer left, the 3 people started bringing out music to the drummer's signal.



Jun Hyuk finally came out of the studio after almost 3 hours. Tara had been waiting for his call and had to start by giving his hands an ice massage when he got in the limousine. He kept blowing his fingertips as though he had gotten injured.

"Tara. Do you know how old those two men are?"

"I'm not sure. Aren't they both over 60?"

"They have 130 years between the two of them. But we only took 1 break in 3 hours. And that was because of me." "What?"

"It's been a while since I've played the guitar, so I felt like my fingers were going to rip.

For old men who drink a lot, their stamina is no joke."

"Did you really not take a break for 3 hours? Just once?"

3 hours is like an opera. Forget the music, that time needs to be supported by stamina.

"Yeah. I honestly think it was because of me. My fingertips still tingle."

"How was the session? Was it okay?"

Jun Hyuk took off the towel wrapped around his hands and put his thumbs up.

"Tell the company that those two men are thinking of releasing an album no matter what."

Tara counted off on her fingers,

"New York Philharmonic performance, Laura's album, the session you just did, and the Seoul performance. How many is that? Aren't you overdoing it this year?"

“There will probably be 1 more.”

“What? What do you mean another one?”

“There’s something. You can expect something good.” Jun Hyuk smiled secretively at Tara.

Chapter 227

While Jun Hyuk was participating in Monterey Jazz Festival, President Stern was preparing the Seoul show. And now, he is in front of the most important person in that performance.

“It was incredible, Isaac. The 1st album that a 17 year old Jun made. I got goosebumps.”

“Yeah. There’s no catch, right? All genres are in one album.”

Alvin Lee—who looks much too old to say that he is 39 years old—was admiring Jun Hyuk’s album without exaggeration.

Alvin Lee is the bassist and vocalist of a rock band that appeared like a comet in the 2000s, but released 2 albums and disappeared. He had to spend 5 years in a rehabilitation center because his drug addiction had gotten to the point where it was difficult for him to continue doing music.

There were a lot of rumors that he would reform the rock band after coming out of rehab, but his first album was surprisingly the blues. And that was solo instead of with a band, with a simple song and serene lyrics.

Alvin Lee overcame that 5 year period and was awarded a Grammy for his comeback album, showing that his genius musicality remained. But focused on making studio albums instead of concerts, and was a hermit singer who only appeared occasionally in small-scale concerts.

So it is surprising to propose a concert to him, and a large-scale Korean one at that. President Stern thinks highly of his vocals, which express his arched life, and firmly believes that he will present a great concert with Jun Hyuk.

“It is iffy to say that is an advantage. From the position of the fans buying the album, they would rather have an album full of the genre that they like. This album just feels like it’s been filled with the best of charts songs.”

“There’s a reason for that. It might not be easy to understand because the lyrics are in

Korean, but it contains the 2 years where Jun started living a stable life for the first time and learned music. You know about his childhood too, don't you?"

"Yes, I saw the lyrics. There were a lot of waves in his life."

Alvin Lee put a cigarette in his mouth. He could not shake the thought that he was incredibly immature and foolish compared to Jun Hyuk because he spent his 20s wasting away on drugs.

"That's why the lyrics have meaning. I had the Korean lyrics translated, so look over those first and then write the English lyrics..."

President Stern handed over the papers with the translated lyrics, but Alvin Lee did not even look at them.

"I'd like to write my lyrics based on how I feel regarding Jun's music that on the original song's Korean lyrics. I don't want to force meaning on the emotions of the original song. We can just forget it if you don't like that."

He was a little surprised by what Alvin Lee said, but he laughed.

"Then that means you'll do it?"

"Yes. It means a singer would be stupid to miss out on a song like this."

"Phew. What a relief. I was worrying that you might reject because you only release your own work."

"Ha ha. It's not like that. I just made my own songs because there wasn't a song I liked.

It's not important who made it if I like it. I'm just a singer."

"Then when can you be done working on the lyrics?"

"I'm already writing them. It won't take long. There was something I thought of when I heard the music."

Alvin Lee put the cigarette out and did not hide something that was bothering him.

"But what are you going to do if Jun doesn't like the lyrics that I wrote?"

"That won't happen."

President Stern spoke nonchalantly, telling him that there is nothing to worry about.

"Aren't you trusting me too much? I'm not a poet like Yates. I can't create incredible lyrics. I just write my thoughts."

"No, that's not what I mean. Jun doesn't pay much attention to lyrics. He thinks of a singer as an instrument. He places more importance on the singer's voice than he does in the lyrics. He thinks more highly of the ability to handle a song well with the voice." Alvin Lee snapped his fingers and nodded.

"Aha! So that's why Laura Goldberg's incredible voice was on that album. It's because he doesn't care about lyrics?"

"Yeah. That's the music that Jun wants, and the reason why I chose you. You're the only vocalist who came to mind when I was listening to Jun's album." Isaac Stern set Alvin Lee up, but he just laughed.

"No way. There are so many great vocalists. Aren't you Isaac Stern, master of the box office? If I sing, the box office element just gets a little stronger. Reappearance of the hermit?

Isn't that what you're going after?"

"Well... I can't say that's not a part of it. Ha ha."

He shook his head as he watched President Stern laughing slyly, but he did not stop smiling.

"Then I'll create a demo as soon as I'm done writing the lyrics and send it over. I hope Jun likes it too."

President Stern smiled widely in satisfaction of the results of today's meeting.

"I'll be waiting in anticipation. Then we'll meet with Jun soon."

"Are you going back to New York?"

“No. I need to go to LA to get a bassist on board.”

Alvin Lee showed interest at the mention of a bassist because he himself is an outstanding bassist.

“LA? Who is it?”

“Colin Sabotos.”

President Stern winked and laughed as he left.



“Mr. Stern. Did you come to LA because of me? You could have just told me over the phone.”

“Would I really have come all the way to LA because of you? I came to see my 4th girlfriend who lives here. You’re just a side note.”

Colin was speechless because he could not tell from Stern’s serious expression whether or not he was joking. It seems like the girlfriend is true, but it is hard to believe that she is the 4th one.

“You can change your show schedule around, right? Jun’s concert in Korea is next month, and I was hoping you would join as bassist.”

“Excuse me? Me?”

When Colin heard President Stern’s sudden proposal, he had thousands of thoughts. “Why? Do you not have the confidence? Or does it not fit into your schedule?”

“Oh, no. It was just so sudden... Did Jun...?”

“Why? Are you thinking of turning this down if Jun had asked for it? Out of a matter of pride?”

“Of course. You have to fill the concert with the best musicians. It needs to be perfect so that no one is falling behind Jun’s standards. And not too long ago in New York, I told Jun about the difficulty I’ve been having. It might be because of that.....”

"It's nothing. I heard you're Jun's friend. Then I'm sure you don't think that Jun is the type of person to take care of such small details like this."

"Yes, well that is true. No, no. Jun isn't good at expressing it, but he does take good care of the people around him."

President Stern squinted at Colin and washed him of his concerns.

"I came to know about you after Jun signed on with our agency. There was an item for arrangement among Jun's income, so I looked into it and it was your album. I came to meet you because the way you played on that remained in my memory."

Colin's face became brighter when he realized that he had been judged on ability.
"Then can you by chance tell me who the vocalist is?"

"Alvin Lee."

"What? Goodness. Alvin Lee on the vocals?"

A genius hermit with diehard fans. He was excited by the possibility of being able to perform with such a musician, but he is also surprised by President Stern's ability to get him on board.

"Then have you decided on a drummer as well?"

Colin's expression showed that he was expecting another tremendous musician's name. "Oh. The drummer is the original drummer. You've heard Jun's Korean album, right?" "Yes, of course."

"Wasn't he great? I got a file of his playing sent from Korea, and he's gotten even better.

So we've decided to use him."

Colin lightly bowed his head to President Stern.

"Anyway, thank you for giving me this opportunity."

"Check the details on the contract. Your manager..."

"Oh, you can just give it to me. I don't have a manager, so....."

“What? You don’t have a manager?”

“It’s a bit complicated.”

Colin looked embarrassed and gave a rough explanation of how his music career has been collapsing ever since the drummer quit.

“Hm... Then just clear your schedule. You’ll need to keep at least 2 weeks before the concert free. 1 week of rehearsals with a temporary band. Then 1 week of rehearsals with the orchestra in Korea. Got it?”

“Yes. I’ll be preparing.”

“Great. Let me know as soon as your schedule is fixed.” President Stern shook Colin’s hand and returned to New York.

Chapter 228

President Stern was reading articles about Monterey Jazz Festival in the car to Jun Hyuk's apartment and frowned. Ibrahim Maalouf's bass performance was selected of the 2 night 3 day show.

All of the reviews said that he showed his genius and artistic talent with performances that were not just romantic and delicate, but also ingenious.

Trumpet performer Ibrahim Maalouf is popular for creating unique music by mixing Arab and electronic music with jazz. He is gaining more fame at the moment because of his soundtrack for the movie.

It is not that there are no articles regarding Jun Hyuk. But they were mostly plain articles.

'It is difficult to handle falling a little short if your expectations are too high.'

President Stern folded the paper he was reading. He could tell what kind of performance Jun Hyuk gave just from reading the articles. The First, the album where he played with Stanley Clarke nonstop for an hour.

Because of The First, critics will have expected an endless spirit of jazz from Jun Hyuk's guitar, but they just got a reproduction of Lee Carlton and Stanley Clarke's hit songs.

This difference will have brought disappointment to critics and die hard jazz fans, and pleasure to people enjoying the festival.

Critics and jazz fans will be enthusiastic about another of Jun Hyuk's performances anyway.

President Stern heard the file that Lee Carlton's exclusive record label sent over. Jun Hyuk's true Monterey Jazz Festival performance is in this 3 hour file.

The first 20 minutes contains the 3 people talking and laughing, and then 1 hour is Jun Hyuk leading the session. They discussed a new style while resting for 30 minutes,

and the following performance was Lee Carlton and Stanley Clarke going back and forth as though in conversation with Jun Hyuk's guitar presenting themes.

Lee Carlton's record label wanted to edit just the performance parts to create 2 albums, but President Stern's thoughts were different.

Their conversations are another part of jazz. He cannot find a reason to go out of their way and omit these gem-like opinions on jazz, music, and performing. He wants to reveal the entire thing as long as Lee Carlton and Stanley Clarke are okay with it.

As soon President Stern walked into the apartment, Jun Hyuk held a score out to him.

"Isaac. This is the score I'm going to use for the show in Seoul. It's the arranged score with orchestration, so you can give it to Seoul Symphony. This is the score for the piano concerto."

"Piano Concerto? What is this? You wrote a new song?"

"No. I arranged AEIOU into a piano song. Oh, just make sure that Amelia plays the premiere."

"Is this a gift for your girlfriend? Ha ha. Fine. I'll hang on to this... Oh right. It's okay if you conduct, right?"

"Of course. It'll become a better gift if I conduct. But is it the New York Philharmonic again?"

"No. The New York Philharmonic has a full schedule through the end of the year. Don't worry, I'll check Amelia's schedule and look into it separately." Isaac Stern gave Jun Hyuk a CD.

"More importantly, listen to this."

"What is this?"

"It's what the singer who will be performing at the show in Seoul sent over. He wrote the lyrics himself, too."

"Who is it?"

“You’ll know when you listen to it.”

When Jun Hyuk turned the CD on, a song from his 1st album – already a thing of the past – came out with an acoustic guitar accompaniment and a man’s rough voice.

“Alvin Lee? Is this really Alvin Lee?”

Jun Hyuk yelled in surprise as soon as he heard the voice on the CD. President Stern laughed without saying anything and only nodded. He put his finger on his lips and signaled to Jun Hyuk to listen to the end.

Alvin Lee’s lyrics are completely different from those of the original song. Yoon Jung Su’s lyrics contained each day of Jun Hyuk’s daily life spent in the cafe. But Alvin Lee’s lyrics are about life. It is a succession of anxiety, washed over in rough waves, but has the meaning that there is reason and value to go on living “even so”.

The CD track ended and President Stern turned to Jun Hyuk,

“What do you think? Do you like it?”

“This man is really impressive.”

Jun Hyuk was already standing up in excitement, pacing the living room.

“What are you talking about? I asked if you like it?”

“He tried to sing without touching the original song at all, even though his vocal color is so different from that of the original singer’s. His ability to control emotion while controlling the tone of his voice is outstanding. He really... is the embodiment of a legend.”

President Stern’s prediction had been on point. Jun Hyuk does not seem to care about the lyric’s message. When President Stern first listened to the CD, he thought of when Alvin Lee said that he is not Yates. He is not a top poet like Yates, but the lyrics are thoughtful with his reconsiderations on life.

However, Jun Hyuk is lost in Alvin Lee’s voice and tone. Isaac laughed.

“Jun. You’re really strange.”

“Excuse me?”

“You don’t care much about the lyrics even though lyrics have incredible power in pop music.”

“Oh.....”

Jun Hyuk calmed down bashfully.

“There’s nothing to do about it. You need to enjoy lyrics, but I can’t do that. They don’t get relayed as words and sentences but as sounds.”

This aspect of Jun Hyuk is an advantage that he can catch music precisely, but also a disadvantage that he will never be able to write lyrics. This also means that President Stern needs to keep looking for lyricists who can create lyrics that fit with Jun Hyuk’s music.

“There’s another strange thing.”

“He he. What’s so strange?”

“Your expression and attitude towards classical and pop music. It almost looks like you love rock, jazz, and the blues more than you do classical.”

“That’s where you’re wrong. I love all of them. It’s just that the happiness I feel with each is different.”

As an average person, President Stern will never know what happiness Jun Hyuk is talking about, so all he could do was shrug.

“Who decided to take on the bass and drums?”

“They’re both people you know. The bass is Colin and the Korean drummer from the 1st album is on the drums.”

“What? Colin?”

Jun Hyuk’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Yeah. It worked out for his schedule too. Why? Don’t you like it?”

“No, it’s not that. I know Colin’s bass well.”

“Then that’s sealed. Does this mean that Jun’s first band has been formed? Ha ha.”

The part that President Stern is looking forward to most for the show in Korea is not the orchestra and piano’s joint performance, but the band. What will the combination of Alvin Lee’s voice and Jun Hyuk’s guitar be like? It is a combination where anticipation is inevitable.

“Alright, now decide where the band rehearsals will be. Here in New York? Or LA? Or... do you want to just go abroad and have fun while you practice?”

“Isaac, will you be there too when we do rehearsals?”

“I’m sure it’ll be different by the location. I’ll go along if it’s abroad.”

President Stern did not hide the excited expression of someone preparing to travel, and Jun Hyuk smirked.

“Since the drummer needs to come from Korea anyway, I guess somewhere in the middle like Hawaii wouldn’t be bad.”

“Okay. Then let’s say Hawaii and I’ll prepare it.”



“Hawaii?”

“Yes. I sent a plane ticket too. We leave in 3 days.”

He is holding the plane ticket to Hawaii in his hand, but he feels like it is a dream and not reality.

Kyung Min Ho, who was the drummer of the band Steel Blade, had also thought that it was a dream when he found out that he had been chosen as the drummer for Jun Hyuk’s Seoul show. But all the way to Hawaii just for rehearsals? This really does feel like a dream.

Kyung Min Ho left the band after he and Jun Hyuk were done with the audition

program. He needed to be a little more selfish for his future. If he stayed in Steel Blade, which Jun Hyuk had said was not progressive, he would be done in music.

He looked for a new band, but that was not easy either. Thankfully, there was no end to places looking for him because they saw how he played the drums on the audition program.

Many studios called requesting drum sessions.

He participated in various types of music, from girl group dance songs to movie soundtracks, and did not stop practicing. Then this amazing opportunity with Jun Hyuk had come to him.

Chapter 229

When Jun Hyuk, Tara, and President Stern arrived in Honolulu, the biggest city in Hawaii, they were not on Oahu Island. Kailua-Kona is a big island with a beach and has relatively less tourists.

After going through a front entrance with security guards and driving for a while, they could see a large mansion. The front of the mansion is decorated like a park and the beach spreads out in the back. Jun Hyuk's jaw dropped at the incredible scale of the place. "Isaac, is this your villa too? It's insane."

President Stern's eyes widened as he waved his hand.

"Oh no, you think I would have such a luxurious villa? You saw the small house in Switzerland, didn't you? That's more my type. This is borrowed."

"Borrowed? Who?"

"Kirk Hammett."

"Kirk Hammett? You're not talking about Kirk Hammett, the guitarist for Metallica, are you?"

"Yeah. This place has a complete studio. You can work on music and it'll be nice and quiet since it's far from the downtown area."

The pictures hanging on the walls inside told them whose villa this is. Metallica and Kirk Hammett's pictures are hanging everywhere.

"Alvin Lee wanted a quiet place too. Oh right. Two maids will be here, so it'll be comfortable."

They followed President Stern into the basement and saw a studio that could hold at minimum, a 24-person band. The studio is so complete that they could record an entire album with the equipment filling the room.

"Then rest until the other people get here. Tara and I will be at a hotel in the city, so

call if you need anything.”

“The house is big. Why don’t you just stay here?”

“When we came all the way to Hawaii? No thanks. I’m going to relax while watching beautiful women in bikinis under the hot sun, so the musicians can spend their time preparing for the concert.”

The first member arrived not long after Tara and President Stern left. Colin’s reaction was not very different from that of Jun Hyuk’s.

“Kirk? Kirk, the Kirk from Metallica?”

“Yeah. There are even a few guitars he uses in the basement, though we can’t touch them.”

“Wow. I can’t believe I’m in Kirk’s villa right now.”

Colin examined all corners of the house and basked in the presence of Kirk Hammett.
“Alvin Lee isn’t here yet?”

“No. I’m sure he’ll arrive soon.”

“Isn’t it incredible? Alvin Lee is going to be singing your song.”

“Colin, don’t make too much of a fuss when Alvin Lee gets here.”

“Of course I won’t. I’m a member of the band, not a fan from now on. And Jun, that’s your band.”

When Alvin Lee entered with his manager however, Colin and Jun Hyuk immediately became fans.

Colin, who is also a bassist, is meeting his idol and seemed to have no thoughts of letting go of Alvin Lee’s hand.

“Jun, my maestro! Since I started music again, this is the first time I’ve been so excited.

Let’s have fun together.”

The 3 people drank refreshing beers and talked about each other's movies until the sun set.

Kyung Min Ho was the last to arrive and was escorted by an employee of Stern Corporation from the airport, and wandered around the house until he found Jun Hyuk.

"Jun Hyuk! Geez. How long has it been?"

"Min Ho. It's nice to see you again. I didn't think we'd meet again like this."

Kyung Min Ho was more surprised now than when he was when he was first contacted about joining in the concert. He is surprised that Jun Hyuk remembers his name and is speaking to him in such a friendly manner.

A few years ago when he had told Jun Hyuk to speak to him informally, Jun Hyuk had been a tough teenager who refused to do so, but he was now doing it so naturally. His thorny side was gone and he seemed to be much more relaxed.

"Hey... I'm touched. You remember my name."

"Ha ha. Honestly, I didn't remember it. I found out your name after you were confirmed to join the concert."

"Of course you did. He he. Anyway, you're really something. You've got the stance of a great now."

"It's because I've gotten older. Oh right. Say hi. This is Colin, who will be on the bass. He's a friend from school. And I'm sure you know this person without my having to tell you? He'll be singing for the concert."

Kyung Min Ho did not even realize that Alvin Lee was holding his hand out to him. He was just frozen, staring at him.

One of the heroes who took over his childhood is standing in front of him, smiling. He did not hear Alvin Lee's blues album, but the 2 he recorded before were masterpieces that shook Kyung Min Ho's soul as it did for countless other youths at the time.

"What are you doing? You have to take the hand first. This kind of opportunity is rare."

Kyung Min Ho quickly took Alvin Lee's hand and shook it as he stuttered,

"Mr. Alvin Lee. I – I – Nice to....."

"Jun, this friend can't speak English, right? Tell him not to worry about it. I can tell what he's trying to say just by looking at his face. Ha ha."

Kyung Min Ho never thought that the day would come when he regrets not learning English. He had not studied English because he could not even guarantee success in Korea. At this moment however, he was extremely jealous of Jun Hyuk speaking English fluently.

While the three spoke in English and laughed, Kyung Min Ho could only drink his beer.

"Jun Hyuk. I'm okay. It's enough for me that I'm drinking beer with Alvin Lee like this."

"It'll be okay when we start playing for the concert tomorrow. Music doesn't need words."

Kyung Min Ho was more concerned about Jun Hyuk who kept taking care of him. He is happy just watching these people right now.

"Min Ho, how have you been?"

"I'm living off of doing drum sessions."

Jun Hyuk started to completely talk to Kyung Min Ho. He is also more curious about the situation in Korea.

"What about the band? You're incredible."

"The places that want me aren't to my liking and the better bands already have great teamwork, so I can't fit myself in."

"Did you ever think about making your own band?"

"How could I? Band leaders need to know how to create music like you. I only play. If I just have people float together, the band will be no good." Kyung Min Ho let out a forced laugh.

“Are sessions doable?”

“I actually make a lot more money than when I was in the band. There are so many recordings to do. There are a lot of dramas and a lot of movies. And you know there are a ton of girl and boy bands. The music is simple too, so it’s quick work. Anyway, that’s what it’s like.” Kyung Min Ho took a gulp of his beer and his face hardened again.

“But do you think I’ll be able to do well? I got really scared once I saw Alvin Lee’s face. I don’t have the confidence either.”

“I heard you play. It’s plenty. I’m sure Alvin will be surprised too.” He felt a little better at Jun Hyuk’s encouragement not to worry.

“But do you know what you’re like in Korea right now? It’s no joke.”

“What?”

“There are a lot of Koreans who got on the world field in sports. But in music, especially in classical, this is the first time anyone’s gotten as famous as you have.....”

Korean TV is currently full of news about Jun Hyuk in real-time. There was even news on the Monterey Jazz Festival not too long ago.

“Even people who have never seen classical concerts know that you challenged Beethoven and succeeded. The Korean press releases articles just say that you’ve gained recognition as the 21st century Beethoven.”

There were times when Kyung Min Ho saw these kinds of articles and found it hard to believe that he had participated on Jun Hyuk’s album.

“You don’t know how much your album has sold, right? It was sold once this concert was announced and promotions started. I’m telling you there’s no stock.”

Jun Hyuk hesitated slightly and asked cautiously,

“Did the tickets sell at all?”

“What? You didn’t know? It sold out in a day.”

“Huh? How many seats are there that it got sold out?”

“Sangam soccer stadium alone has over 60,000 seats. It’ll be over 80,000 including the field standing seats. Oh right. Your agency is really great. They used the single ticket policy.”

“Single ticket? The seats aren’t assigned?”

“Yup. The price is \$100. It’s first come, first served. There’s no distinction between A, B, S, and VIP or anything like that. You just have to enter the venue first. People saw that in an even better light.”

One of the requests that President Stern drove at the company doing promotions in Korea, was the ticket policy. He insisted that the performance with Alvin Lee is the main event, not the orchestra and piano concerto.

He thought that the way to fill good seats in a pop music concert is through passion, not money. It was the result of Stern’s insistence that there would be plenty reward for waiting for a long time on line.

Kyung Min Ho forgot his exhaustion from the long flight and his jet lag, and stayed up until the morning, enjoying this time that feels like a dream.

Chapter 230

Kyung Min Ho woke up early in the morning, walked around near the house, looked at the exotic Pacific Ocean, and really felt like he is in Hawaii. He went down to the basement before the others got up, and started warming up on the drums.

The 3 people woke up after noon, and gathered in the studio while waiting for their bodies to wake up.

“You know that this show is different from that of an average band, right? It’s a joint performance with the Seoul Symphony. It means we can’t perform according to how we’re feeling during the concert.”

Jun Hyuk gave Colin and Kyung Min Ho the score.

“Jun, what about mine?”

“Alvin, do you need one? You can just sing along to the accompaniment. It’s actually us who need to avoid being overpowered by your singing.”

Kyung Min Ho started by worrying because it is his first time performing with an orchestra.

“Jun Hyuk, but what about the orchestra’s performance? Don’t we need to start matching our tempos now?”

“It’s prepared. We recorded the orchestra part on the piano, so play while keeping balance in mind.”

“Then shall we get started?”

Alvin Lee cleared his throat a few times and stood in front of the microphone.

When a hoarse, thick, and low voice came out from the amp, the 3 young men also made quiet sounds. Kyung Min Ho in particular was in such awe that he let go of his drum sticks. A heavy voice incomparable to that of Alvin Lee when he was in his 20s. A vocal that is much more mature with a feeling of depth.

Kyung Min Ho felt like he could cry while he was playing the drums. It was not the image he had always seen through videos. He is looking not at his front, but his dependable back. The drummer is the only person who can see the vocalist's back.

Kyung Min Ho filled his eyes with Alvin Lee's back and could really feel that he is Alvin Lee's drummer.

When the first song was over, Lee looked at Kyung Min Ho and spoke,

"Jun, tell the drummer to loosen up a bit. He's too stiff."

"It's okay since he's just nervous because of you, Alvin. With a little time, his true self will come through. Once he explodes, you'll be able to hear a thunderous sound that doesn't stop."

"Jun, what do you think of this?"

As bassist, Colin could pick up on the drummer's problem quickest.

"Let's go without the piano so the drummer can relax. He's too conscious of the piano's tempo."

Jun Hyuk nodded at Colin's suggestion. Kyung Min Ho has never played with an orchestra. They need to slowly get him accustomed to it.

"Min Ho, let's try it again without the piano part. And don't look at my score now, just find the tempo yourself. Relax a little."

"Oh, sorry. It's as though I was playing soccer on a neighborhood field and am suddenly playing for the English premiere league....."

"He he. Looking at your skill alone, you have plenty right to be here. And let's start with the 4th track. It'll help you release tension since it's heavy metal."

Kyung Min Ho quickly thought of all of the songs on Jun Hyuk's album. Of a total of 10 songs, there is 1 piano solo, 1 heavy metal, and 3 songs without guitars. The orchestra will play a great role in the songs without guitar in particular. He paid more attention with the thought that unless he hurries up and gets used to an orchestral accompaniment, he could be the reason why their performance is ruined. It is not a time for him to just be in awe.

"Alright then. Let's start with the 4th track. Alvin, the original song is heavy metal. Shall we get the mood up?"

Alvin Lee did not look back, put up his finger, and signaled his okay.

Kyung Min Ho sent the start signal with his drumsticks, and played the drums. When Colin's fast bass fingering increased and Jun Hyuk's guitar riff began, Alvin Lee's rough and husky voice started going up.

While playing the guitar, Jun Hyuk listened to the harmony between Colin's bass and Kyung Min Ho's drums. As the peal grew, he could tell how much Kyung Min Ho's sense of rhythm had advanced. It seems that playing sessions for all different genres was the driving force.

When the much freer drum performance ended, Alvin Lee turned and clapped lightly.

"Great. Just keep playing the drums like this. Your sense of rhythm is good and the hits are exact."

When Jun Hyuk translated, Kyung Min Ho blushed and bowed his head. With more confidence, his drumming gradually showed its true manifestation. Even with the orchestral piano accompaniment, his drumming did not waver and their preparation for the concert went on favorably.

Isaac, who disappeared after the first night they arrived in Hawaii, appeared again after exactly 1 week. He must have been lying around on the beach for a really long time because he has clear tan lines.

"I'm sure you're all ready to go? Shall we go to Korea now?"

"Rock n' roll!"

The 4 people facing President Stern look like a complete rock band. They got on a limousine to the airport and boarded Stern's private plane.

When the private plane was flying over Korea, Tara quietly called Jun Hyuk.

"Jun. There are a lot of people gathered at the airport right now. We're going to go to the hotel after a little photo time. You'll do your interview at the hotel, so just know that's happening.

And change into this."

Tara had been meticulous enough to pack a shirt and suit, loafers, and neck tie.

"A suit? Why all of a sudden? Everyone's dressed casually. I'll stick out too much."

"In a broad spectrum, it's part of creating your image. You're building your image as a modern maestro. The details are from sponsors. You especially need to wear the watch. When you wave to people at the airport, do it with your left hand so the watch stands out."

"What is this? We're doing all this stuff we normally don't do. Are the suit and shoes advertising too?"

Tara laughed and nodded.

"We need to accept it when the conditions are good. The amount of money we got to have you wear that watch while in Korea is more than the amount you'd make for selling 100,000 copies of your album. That's something we need to do."

"You're slowly using me as a billboard."

"Don't worry. Do you know how many proposals you've gotten as an advertisement model from Korea? Each of the model fees match up to the guarantee for the Seoul concert.

We turned all of those down."

Jun Hyuk stopped buttoning the shirt and smiled.

"If it's that much, let's shoot a few while we're in Korea. Is there need to turn them down?"

"Hang on. You need to take care of your image until the real big shot comes in. There's no reason to shoot an advertisement for some Korean press agency and miss out on something bigger."

"What on earth is the bigger thing? Tell me in more detail."

"We're working on Aston Martin and Bugatti right now. We're looking into an exclusive

contract with one of the two. Beethoven's car! It's bigger than all of the Korean ads combined."

Jun Hyuk realized that President Stern had not been joking entirely when he said that he would be working Jun Hyuk hard. He was working him appropriately and expensively.



When the door for the arrivals gate opened, there was tremendous cheering from the people greeting the 4 men. Beyond the reporters' camera flashes, there were people waving signs of various colors with Jun Hyuk's name written on them.

"Jun. Don't forget to wave with your left hand."

Tara whispered to Jun Hyuk and he smiled brightly, waving his left hand. Then he turned to Kyung Min Ho beside him,

"Min Ho. There's something you didn't tell me."

"What? What didn't I tell you?"

"That I have a lot more male fans."

More than half of the fans cheering for him in the airport are males.

"The guys aren't here to see you. Men aren't fans of good looking men. They're all here to see Alvin Lee."

"What are you talking about? News about Alvin Lee's participation hasn't been revealed yet."

"You need to get on social media. There's no such thing as a secret. The whole world already knows about Alvin Lee joining the concert."

They got out of the arrival point and went to a temporary wall with the Seoul airport and sponsor logos to smile and wave. Alvin Lee whispered among the endless camera flashing,

"Jun, am I famous in Korea? Are those guys really my fans?"

"Not as much as Nirvana, but you have a lot of followers. Smile for them a bit."

Jun Hyuk and his party took photos for a while and then left for the hotel. There were a lot of fans waiting at the hotel as well.

"Jun. I didn't know you were such a star in Korea."

"I didn't know either. I'm sure it's the power of the press."

Jun Hyuk's group waved to the fans again and went up to the hotel's royal suite.

Yoon Kwang Hun and Lawyer Baek Seung Ho were waiting for Jun Hyuk in the royal suite. Fortunately, the two men did not make a fuss after seeing Alvin Lee. Alvin Lee was born too late to be one of their heroes. Yoon Kwang Hun and Baek Seung Ho's heroes are the already old Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, and Ronnie James Dio who had already passed away.

Baek Seung Ho was pleased to see Jun Hyuk for the first time in a while, and handed him a couple papers after catching up.

"This is a statement regarding the income you've brought in in Korea until now. Look over it carefully."

"I'm sure you took good care of it."

Baek Seung Hun handed the papers to Jun Hyuk again when he did not even look at them.

"Jun Hyuk. At least check the quarterly financial statements yourself. It's not a difficult account book. I'm telling you to take a look at how much you made, how much you spent, and how much you paid in taxes at the least. Even if your management agency takes good care of you, make sure you do a final check. All adults do it."

Jun Hyuk listened to Baek Seung Ho. He looked over 4 sheets filled with numbers and realized one thing.

"I thought I used money freely, but I was actually saving a lot."

"Hey. You spend a lot! You just earn more. He he."

He could tell that Jun Hyuk had not just skimmed through it without paying attention from the way he talked about his spending. Baek Seung Ho laughed wholeheartedly and kept giving Yoon Kwang Hun a weird look.

"Jun Hyuk. I'm going to talk to Tara for a second, so learn how to spend from Lawyer Baek. You need to know how to save, too."

Yoon Kwang Hun gave a pat to Jun Hyuk on the shoulder and left the room to look for Tara. He called Tara out quietly and she went pale after talking for a while.

"It's my mistake. I didn't check on the situation in Korea at all. I was forgetting that it's Jun's motherland. What do I do?"

"I'm telling you in advance because I thought that would be the case. Just wait for now, I'll talk to Jun. It's something he needed to go through at least once." "I'll start by canceling the interview."

When Tara was about to walk away, Yoon Kwang Hun stopped her.

"Tara. There's no way for Jun to avoid it while he's in Korea. He'll know as soon as a reporter puts a microphone to him and asks a question. It could be better to just have him face it head on."

Yoon Kwang Hun calmed Tara down, took a deep breath, and went back to Jun Hyuk.

"Did you learn a little on how to spend your money?"

"I know the easiest way. You just don't."

Jun Hyuk laughed as he spoke, but he had felt that something was weird between the two men.

"What's going on? Do I need to keep looking at these documents? If there's something you need to say, hurry up and say it like an adult!"

Yoon Kwang Hun looked at Jun Hyuk and cautiously spoke,

"You have 2 interviews today, right? One joint press conference with all 4 people and one by yourself."

"Yes."

"An uncomfortable question might come out in that solo conference."

"Sir. Don't go in circles, and just say it. What's the problem?"

Baek Seung Ho spoke quickly when Jun Hyuk looked frustrated. It is easier to reveal these things quickly. It just becomes harder to say if they keep dragging it out.

"It actually began when you started being treated like a hero in Korea... but it came out when this concert became news and there was talk about your guarantee amount and money."

"So what is that?"

Jun Hyuk's voice rose in frustration.

"There are a lot of people coming out to say that they're your biological parents. There's no better gossip, so the press is pouring out articles like this too." Yoon Kwang Hun spoke calmly in a low voice.

"I'm pretty sure they'll ask about it during the press conference. Are you going to meet the people who claim to be your biological parents or if you're going to do a DNA test....."

Baek Seung Ho could not say anymore. Jun Hyuk's body was frozen and his expression had not changed at all, and he was just looking at the document on top of the table.

Yoon Kwang Hun gave Baek Seung Ho a look at got up. His thinking is that it is better to let him be alone in such a time. When they came out of the hotel room, Baek Seung Ho looked at Yoon Kwang Hun in worry.

"Do you think he'll be okay? I think the shock is big."

"Of course it was a big shock. Let's leave him alone. He's not a kid anymore. He'll cope

with it well. I'm sure he'll say something once he's done thinking. Let's wait until then." Tara came to them. Her face did not look good either.

"Mr. Yoon. Did you tell him?"

"Yes."

"How is he?"

"It'll be a huge shock. I thought it'd be best to let him be alone for now."

"I'm sure. I'm sorry, it's my mistake. I should have known if something like this was going on... First for the press conference... I had it pushed back due to exhaustion from the flight."

"That's good. And Jun needs to know about this anyway. Jun needs to make the decision himself when it comes to matters regarding his biological parents. And you can leave him to us to take care of him."

Tara bowed her head and turned around.

"This won't do. I'll have them proceed with the joint press conference without Jun. The reporters will understand as well because Jun has his press conference."

"Then you can do that."

Tara needed to get moving busily.

Chapter 231

The press conference at the hotel was a feast for the reporters. Alvin, who became a star after just 2 albums before meeting his downfall with drugs and becoming a hermit blues musician. A classical cello major holding a bass guitar. A nameless session drummer who is like Cinderella, getting the chance to perform with a world renowned star.

There seemed to be no end to the interview because Korean and foreign reporters gathered to flood Alvin Lee with questions.

Tara did not end the interview. The content was still good and she needed to buy more time for Jun Hyuk to overcome the shock.

“Is Jun still the same?”

“Yes. I checked in on him for a second, but he is sitting in the same place without moving.”

It was hard for Tara to forgive herself for not knowing about this situation.

“Tara. It’s something that would have happened at some point or another. It’s just that we didn’t have time to prepare... Actually, it’s a question as to whether or not we would be able to prepare for something like this.”

Yoon Kwang Hun saw that Tara was being hard on herself and comforted her.

“Is the interview wrapping up?”

“Yes. Now, we need to end it. The reporters will think something is strange if we keep it going.”

“Then, let’s cancel the solo interview. We can’t push him into a press conference in this state.”

Yoon Kwang Hun made the final decision.

“Alright. I’ll take care of it.”

Tara tried to go to the press conference hall, but she could not take a step.

“What are you taking care of? Tara, I’m a little late, right? Let’s hurry. I’m sure everyone else is having a rough time because of me.”

Jun Hyuk burst through the door, took a surprised Tara by the arm, and was smiling.

“Jun Hyuk. There’s no reason for you to overdo it, and we can push the interview back.”

Yoon Kwang Hun felt bad that Jun Hyuk was forcing himself to smile, and his own expression continued to be hard.

“Why? I’m not overdoing it. And I heard what you both said. It’s something that I’ll experience sooner or later, and it just happens to be today. Of course that ‘something’ won’t disappear on its own.”

Jun Hyuk spoke in English so Tara could understand. His waved his left hand and pointed to his watch.

“Don’t I need to show this watch a lot during the press conference? I know that much too, Tara.”

Yoon Kwang Hun saw the smile on Jun Hyuk’s face and knew that his worries were unfounded.

“Tara. Go ahead.”

Yoon Kwang Hun nodded to Tara. It means there is no reason to worry. It is Jun Hyuk’s personal problem. Eventually, Jun Hyuk will make the decision.



When Alvin Lee and the others left the conference hall, the reporters just murmured in waiting for Jun Hyuk to enter. If Jun Hyuk does not show up, they will need to write articles guessing about why that is.

The entrance was a little noisy, and Jun Hyuk entered the conference hall without

losing his smile.

“I’m sorry for making you wait. I was resting because I was not in a great condition, but I made this run late.”

After Jun Hyuk’s greetings, the reporters began asking questions. They even showed the courtesy to start with easier ones.

“You chose Edvard Grieg as your repertoire with Seoul Symphony. Is there a particular reason for that?”

“Seoul Symphony chose that song, and I also wanted to perform it because it is a wonderful song. There won’t be a different reason for it.”

“Two of the people in your band are not famous. Is there a special reason as to why you chose them?”

“Once the concert is over, they will be recognized for their abilities and they will become famous. Colin, the bassist, is already performing actively in America in the west coast, and Kyung

Min Ho, the drummer, is famous in the music industry.”

“Since Alvin Lee got back into music, this is his first concert of such a large scale. How did you convince him to join?”

“Someone else was the one to convince him, but... I’m sure that means that’s how great my song is? That it would even make a hermit come out? Ha ha.”

The reporters’ response to Jun Hyuk’s joke was not good. They were all thinking of the last question they would ask.

“The new solo song that you released is creating a lot of news. There are a lot of versions coming out with arrangements in different instruments. If they want to create an aria with lyrics or arrange it into pop music, would you allow it?”

“I already revealed the score. If someone wants to make a song, whether it is pop or even a song for children, it does not matter to me.”

The interview questions continued to be about music. It seemed to be a normal

atmosphere with intermittent joking and occasional questions with depth from music magazines, but an unknown tension was staining the air.

After a fairly long amount of time and it felt that they had reached the end of interview questions, reporters began to clear their throats awkwardly. As though it was a signal, one reporter bravely asked the question.

“I don’t know if you know, but people have begun to appear, claiming to be your biological parents.”

“I see.”

They had been waiting for a longer response, but Jun Hyuk just nodded.

“What does ‘I see’ mean?”

“You didn’t ask a question just now, so there’s nothing for me to say.”

The reporter thought that Jun Hyuk had been avoiding the question, and took the microphone. The arrow is already flying, so it needs to hit the target and that target is what Jun Hyuk is really thinking.

“Alright, then I’ll modify the question. Of course, there have been people who are just trying to gain attention outrageously, but there are those who could quite possibly be your biological parents. Do you have thoughts of confirming if they are your biological parents with blood tests? And if you do find your biological parents, please tell us what you will do.”

The cameras began flashing again because Jun Hyuk had been smiling until now, but his face had hardened.

He sat for a while and took in the flashing cameras before slowly opening his mouth.

“I will check one thing first. You said that there are ‘people’ claiming to be my biological parents, but I can’t have multiple parents so there’s a high possibility that they are all fake.”

“I’m sure we can’t rule out that possibility.”

“My biological parents left me my name and birth date, so that alone would be able to

eliminate a lot of people impersonating my biological parents.”

“Does that mean you will look for your biological parents?”

“Sir, will you let me speak to the end?”

When Jun Hyuk spoke with a hard face, the other reporters shut their mouths.

“With ill intentions... well, I’m sure it’s money? Anyway, if anyone tries to falsely claim rights from now on, I don’t know if this is possible, but I will take legal action. They approached me with intentional fraud? Well... something like that.” Jun Hyuk took a sip of his water.

“My legal representative, Mr. Baek Seung Ho, is at one of the top law firms in the country and I believe that they are capable of finding grounds for punishment. I won’t be concerned with

how much it costs. I think that they will understand from what I said.”

Jun Hyuk’s anger was relayed to the reporters through his determined voice.

“But there is still the possibility that someone is your biological parent.”

“I only attended music school, but I learned a lot beyond music. There are important things among them, and it is that greed is bad.”

“Do you mean to say that those claiming to be your biological parents are showing greed?”

“No. I mean that I will not be greedy.”

Jun Hyuk still had the microphone in his hand, so the reporters just waited for him to go on.

“I already have a parent. And a parent who loves me excessively at that.”

“Are you referring to Mr. Yoon Kwang Hun?”

“Yes. I still call him ‘Sir’ but since the moment I first met him, I have never forgotten that he is my father.”

Up to here was what the reporters had been expecting. It also means that he is drawing a line with the people claiming to be his biological parents.

“And I have a lot of mothers.”

The reporters had thought that he was done but when he kept speaking, they all put their hands down.

“Teacher Go Sae Won, who led me so that I would not gain bad habits while playing the piano. Professor Jeon Hye Jin, who desperately wants me to truly express myself and grow as a proper pianist. Lawyer Baek Seung Ho, who went out of his way to interfere with the press’ malicious articles. Teachers Yoon Jung Su, Jo Hyung Joong, and Kim Jong Suk, who showed me the various possibilities of music.”

Jun Hyuk started to talk about each person who worries for him.

“Lawyer Lim So Mi, who never forgets to make me tonkatsu in America. President Isaac Stern, who treats me like a prince and creates an environment in which I can create music that’s better than money. And Tara Butters, who never leaves my side and takes care of me like a real older sister.”

Jun Hyuk felt better after recalling the good people around him, and started to smile.

“Lastly, there’s even my girlfriend, Amelia, who understands and loves me regardless of the problems I have due to my personality. All of these people are my mothers. But to look for more parents? That would be greedy.”

All of the names flowed out in order. The reporters know Jun Hyuk’s precise thoughts, however, they did not want a metaphor, just his exact wording.

“Can we interpret that as you’re saying that you will not be looking for your biological parents or going through DNA testing?”

“Yes. And if you meet anyone claiming to be my biological parents, please be sure to tell them not to make a fit and continue living as they have been.”

There was no reporter who did not feel Jun Hyuk’s deeply hidden resentment and anger when he said ‘make a fit’.

“Mr. Jang Jun Hyuk. Of the people claiming to be your biological parents, they might

actually just want to apologize and ask for forgiveness."

"Forgiveness? If they really want to be forgiven for abandoning me as a newborn baby, it's not too late. They can go to the orphanage immediately and adopt a child, helping him or her grow into a great adult. Isn't that the most suitable way to be forgiven for their past wrongs?"

Yoon Kwang Hun watched the press conference and translated everything for Tara. But he could not keep translating when the word 'father' came out.

Jun Hyuk was not able to hide how worked up he is, but looking at the way he relays this thoughts calmly and exactly, Yoon Kwang Hun just had one thought. He is all grown up. And he grew up well.

When Jun Hyuk was done speaking, Yoon Kwang Hun said to Tara,

"Tara, it's all over. End the interview."

Tara had been completely silent and did not know what had been said during the press conference. Yoon Kwang Hun saw that she was nervous and smiled as he spoke,

"Tara, you don't need to worry. I've never seen a better interview. Jun handled it really well."

Tara saw him smiling brightly and calmed down as she went out into the conference hall.

Jun Hyuk saw her come in and stood up to say his goodbyes to the reporters before leaving.

"You heard the whole interview, right?"

When Jun Hyuk found Yoon Kwang Hun waiting outside the conference hall, his face flushed red.

"Yeah."

"What did you think?"

"You were a little cool today. Kid, you're all grown up. Makes me proud." He hit Jun

Hyuk's back and stopped walking for a second.

"Oh. The 'make a fit' at the end was a little much, but... ugh, damn whatever. Anyway, you did well."

Tara saw that both of their expressions were bright and felt as if a burden had been lifted.

"I'm hungry. Let's go eat something."

Tara locked arms with both of them and headed to the restaurant.

Chapter 232

“Wow – Jang Jun Hyuk! You were really cool yesterday. So much charisma.”

“My looks have always worked out a bit. Even the top camera men in New York admired it. He he.”

Lawyer Baek Seung Ho quietly called Jun Hyuk out early in the morning while he was still half asleep. Jun Hyuk held his yawn back and took the coffee that Baek Seung Ho held out to him.

“You didn’t call me out this early in the morning to compliment me on my charisma, did you? Oh, I included Lawyer Bae – oh – uncle’s name yesterday as well. So you wouldn’t be sad.” Baek Seung Ho glared at him when he said lawyer, and Jun Hyuk quickly changed it.

“Yeah, uncle. How great is it? Much friendlier. Anyway, there’s something I need to tell you from yesterday’s press conference. I’m talking to you alone so that we can handle the legal matters tidily.”

“Huh? Isn’t it all settled?”

“It has been with the press and socially. I’m sure most of the people claiming to be your parents will shrink back. Since you revealed your end of it, they’ll know that they’ll be in big trouble if they keep hanging on.”

“Then, what’s the problem?”

“Money.”

Baek Seung Ho tried to speak as calmly as possible. He is trying to talk about deciding through reason and not emotion.

“You’re an adult. No one can touch the money you’ve made. Not even your biological parents.”

“Then, what’s the problem? Isn’t it over?”

Jun Hyuk knows fully well that this has happened because of money. That is why he revealed that not even his biological parents will be able to claim rights to his money during the press conference.



This situation is not comfortable for Baek Seung Ho, but he needs to forget his personal feelings. He needs to be loyal to his role as a lawyer by advising his client in the best way possible.

“The problem is when you die. You...”

“So the problem is who gets the inheritance in my will.”

Baek Seung Ho was surprised by the calm way Jun Hyuk spoke.

“Doesn’t Yoon Kwang Hun become the heir?”

“Kwang Hun is just a legal guardian. This lost all validity once you became an adult.

Strictly speaking, he’s a stranger now.”

Jun Hyuk could tell what Baek Seung Ho was trying not to say. If something happens to him, his biological parents are able to claim all rights.

“I see. Then, it’s clear what method is left. I can write a will.”

Jun Hyuk talked about a will as easily as he would a score. Baek Seung Ho was the one surprised by Jun Hyuk’s attitude.

“Well this... money is scary, isn’t it? Even a middle-aged man like me who could die and it would be normal, hasn’t had to think about it, but you’re only in your 20s and you need to write one.”

A will is only a record of who will be receiving the inheritance he has saved until his death. It is just a document that is unnecessary if there is nothing to leave behind, but if that inheritance is large, age is irrelevant.

“It’s laughable, but I’m thinking it’s good to be prepared just in case. Leaving a will

written up could be the best thing to do. Of course you can change the content whenever you want to. You can change it when you get married or have kids.”

Baek Seung Ho spoke with difficulty while there was no change in Jun Hyuk's expression.

“And this is included in client attorney confidentiality, so I won’t tell anyone about what you include. Right now, I’m talking as your lawyer and not your uncle.”

“Great. Lawyer Baek! Then, I’ll tell you after thinking for a bit. It won’t take long. I’ll resolve it before we leave Korea after the concert. That’s okay?”

“Of course. Take your time. And there’s something I heard from people writing their wills.”

Baek Seung Ho smiled for the first time.

“They said that they don’t think about their deaths when they’re writing their wills. Instead, they imagine the people around them and can know their real thoughts on those people. How much they love those people and how much they hate them. That comes out in the will.”

“I’m sure that means they’re looking back.”

“Yeah. Vividly.”

Jun Hyuk looked refreshed and laughed.

“Seems like it’ll be fun. He he. And it seems I really am unique. I have to do such strange things.”

“I’ll say. I didn’t know I’d have to say something like this so early in the morning.” They laughed for a while and then went to eat breakfast.



As anyone could guess, the word that dominated the search engine immediately following the interview is Jang Jun Hyuk.

People who appeared late as his biological parents were already being hit by public opinion and Jun Hyuk's interview brought results with public support. Therefore, it seemed that this problem had sunk and would be difficult to bring up again.

The attention to Jun Hyuk's personal history was moved to the concert, but the Korean company responsible for promotions felt like they could have cheered in joy. The broadcasting station that planned to record and air it changed the direction.

The time of the recording was not decided, but the live broadcast was confirmed for a golden time over the weekend and sponsors got in line to secure ad space on the billboard inside the concert hall.

"Jun. What do you think about resting today? I'll ask the Seoul Symphony about it. They'll understand if they saw the interview yesterday."

Tara felt bad for Jun Hyuk, who was busy from early in the morning. However, Jun Hyuk had already gotten completely dressed and left the hotel without seeming tired at all.

"It's okay. I can't just sit blankly in the hotel. Seoul Symphony doesn't have just 1 or 2 people, but dozens. I don't want to cause an inconvenience. And it's good because I don't think about anything else when we perform together."

The first day of rehearsals at the Arts Center began with Grieg's piano concerto. While Jun Hyuk was in rehearsal, Alvin Lee and Colin went looking around Seoul and handled their promotion schedules.

Colin is not known at all in Korea, but it was not enough time for Alvin lee who once made news all over the world.

"How are there no female fans?"

"Alvin. I get treated like I'm a session man for Alvin's band. Just be satisfied."

While they were arguing, Jun Hyuk was acting as the Seoul Symphony's conductor and music director.

"Maestro Jun, so we meet like this. Oh right. I'm sure using Jun is better than Jang since it's more commonly used all over the world?"

“Hello, sir. Just call me comfortably by my name.”

“Nonsense. Don’t undermine the minimal way I can express respect.”

Jung Sae Myung’s hair is spotted with white and he smiled and drank tea while sitting across from Jun Hyuk.

Jung Sae Myung was active in Europe, including France, so Seoul Symphony Orchestra is special to him. It is the first place that gave him the title of standing conductor and he has held that position for 7 years while developing the Seoul Symphony into a great instrument. Seoul Symphony is also where he was able to fully take on his role as conductor.

They had been able to consistently release albums in Korea, where the market for classical is small, because of Jung Sae Myung’s power. However, he also knows that there is a limit to the Seoul Symphony’s ability to be at the level of world-renowned orchestras.

Jung Sae Myung can never become A+, but the effort he put into being A- exceeds A+.

So to him, Jun Hyuk is a phenomenal presence. He conducted the New York Philharmonic without any special school or effort, and there are a lot of orchestras that would love to take him on if he agreed to do so now. Looking at Jun Hyuk who achieved what he can never do even after working his whole life in 2 to 3 years, he could not hide a strange feeling.

“But sir, why did you choose Grieg’s song? I was expecting you to choose Tchaikovsky.”

“Why Tchaikovsky?”

“Because I felt regret.”

“Regret, you say.....”

Jung Sae Myung looked at Jun Hyuk with hooded eyes.

“I went to watch Seoul Symphony a lot before I went to the U.S. It’s something that I felt then, but it seemed like you love Tchaikovsky most.”

“But why did you feel regret? When as you say, I love Tchaikovsky most?”

“Because for the audience’s sake, Seoul Symphony needs to perform more Beethoven or Mozart than Tchaikovsky.”

“Ha ha. Well. You’re a regular profiler. You’re saying you realized all of that through the music alone? But why did you think that we would do Tchaikovsky for this concert?”

Jung Sae Myung felt burdened when Jun Hyuk said that he had come to watch his own performances often. If he is not able to show that he has grown over time, his abilities and the orchestra will just become frogs trapped in a well.

“This might be the first time that the Seoul Symphony is performing for an audience of 80,000. I thought that you would want to show all of those people Tchaikovsky, since this kind of opportunity is rare.”

“You’re right. But I’m not an amateur who can only perform the music that I like. Since it’s a job with a high salary, the priority is to satisfy the audience.”

“Then, wouldn’t Beethoven or Mozart have been better?”

“No. There isn’t anyone who doesn’t know that the main event of this concert isn’t Seoul

Symphony, but your band. We’re just supporting performers.”

“Is that the reason why you chose Grieg?”

“Most of the people who will gather in Sangam-dong are not interested in classical music. Even so, playing Beethoven or Mozart is tired out so I chose Grieg’s concerto. They don’t know Grieg very well, but everyone moves along to the music with the piano concerto comes out. It’s a song that people have heard often before.”

“If they weren’t expecting it but hear a song that they’re familiar with, they’ll concentrate. Is it a strategy?”

“Since a concert is all a show. Don’t you think it needs to be fun? Oh, and there’s another advantage to this song.”

It had not crossed Jun Hyuk to keep the entire concert with pop music in mind when choosing the song. Jung Sae Myung’s selection after considering multiple variables is surprising.

"This song is short. It's over after just 30 minutes. The audience will come prepared to have fun. We can't bore those people out. Dragging it out any longer is selfish."

"You're very different from what I had thought?"

"What had you thought? Old-fashioned? Full of a sense of authority?"

Jun Hyuk did not respond. An image that everyone has, one of aristocratic authority where they are lost in their own worlds. Jung Sae Myung, on the other hand, is almost overly honest.

"A visiting conductor can keep his pride. But the moment you become a standing conductor, there's something more important. It's a professional band, so you can't ignore money. You need to find adequate compromise with money in one hand and music in the other."

Seoul Symphony are just supporting performers for Jun Hyuk and the band. Money is heavy in this concert. Jung Sae Myung's face is smiling, but he does not look like he is entirely comfortable.

"Then, shall we go? The orchestra is dying to see if your abilities are really as the rumors say."

Chapter 233

Grieg, representing Norway, is called the 'Chopin of the North'. Piano Concerto in A minor, his greatest masterpiece, was written when he was 25 years old and is full of gentleness and richness; but, it also has the unique color of the north. This piece, overflowing with grand and dramatic beauty, is also his only piano concerto.

Grieg wrote this piece to show his talent in performing. It allows performers to exert all of their piano techniques, so it is a concerto preferred by soloists.

Harmony of the piano and orchestra.

The pure intention and fresh composition technique of the piano and orchestra beautiful harmony also includes Norway's national sentiment. If it is a minor, it is common to be sad and depressing, but this song is forged with clean melodies of Norway folk, fresh harmonies along with vivid and youthful passion.

As soon as the song started, Jun Hyuk brought out a piano melody like a waterfall. The performance ability can be evaluated from just the first verse of this song, so Jung Sae Myung and the orchestra members could fully understand that Jun Hyuk's talent on the piano does not stray from the rumors.

However, the first verse was all of it. After the strong first verse, the piano started to jump around as if dancing alone and there was no harmony with the orchestra to be found. They had expected a cool melody and youthful rhythm of northern Europe, but it exceeded this and felt almost like a dance song.

When the first part was over, Jung Sae Myung put the baton down and the orchestra members were sending sharp criticism with their eyes.

"Maestro Jun, hang on."

Jung Sae Myung took Jun Hyuk and left the practice room.

"What are you doing right now? You showed us a wonderful introduction. Why are you performing like an amateur?"

"Oh. I thought of something else all of a sudden and tested it out. I'm sorry if it was uncomfortable."

When Jun Hyuk bowed his head, Jung Sae Myung was incredulous. A sudden experiment? But before he could say anything else, Jun Hyuk said something more ridiculous. "Sir. Let's end the rehearsal here for today, and you and I should have a meeting. No.

We should have a meeting with everyone."

Jung Sae Myung was speechless and stare blankly, while Jun Hyuk took out his cellphone.

"Tara, I'm going back to the hotel now. Can you get the car ready? And tell Isaac and the band members... No. Just tell the drummer to come. Also, I need to see the Korean manager for the concert and the music director right away. Call them quickly. I'm going to the parking lot with Maestro Jung."

Jun Hyuk hung up the phone and bowed to Jung Sae Myung again.

"Sir, just trust me and come with me. And tell the orchestra members that today's rehearsal is up to here. I'll tell you the details in the car."

Jung Sae Myung glowered at Jun Hyuk for a moment and then let out a long sigh.

"Fine. But, you'll need to show me that you didn't waste today. If you don't, I might get really mad."

"That won't happen. I'm actually pretty sure you're going to enjoy it as well. Trust me."

Jun Hyuk winked and put his hand on his chest. Jung Sae Myung smiled and went back to the practice room.

"Everyone, I'm sorry. There's a severe disagreement with the pianist regarding the music. I'll need to tune it a bit with the pianist. Let's meet again at this time tomorrow. That is all."

Jun Hyuk took Jung Sae Myung by the arm and ran to the parking lot. As soon as they got in the car, he put his hand out to Tara.

“Tara. Can you give me the score for the drums?”

Tara gave him a score and he started to draw out lines for the drums. Jung Sae Myung was looking at the score and when he realized that it is an allegro molto moderato, he knew that it was Grieg’s piano concerto.

“Are you arranging it right now? And you’re going to put drums in there?”

“Sir, hang on. It’ll be over soon.”

After more than 10 minutes, Jun Hyuk closed the score.

“Are you done?”

“Yes.”

“Then, you have to explain what all this fuss is about.”

Jung Sae Myung’s preposterous feeling has calmed down a lot. Jun Hyuk had drawn out the drums that would go into a 30 minute piano concerto in a little over 10 minutes. He has just confirmed the rumors with his eyes and thought that it is worth it to invest a day.

“My thoughts changed a little. I don’t think we need to perform Grieg’s piano concerto by the book for this concert.”

“So you arranged it and added in drums?”

“Yes. What do you think of making it a little more modern so that the 80,000 person audience can enjoy it? Isn’t it a soccer stadium?”

Jung Sae Myung realized Jun Hyuk’s intent and immediately disapproved.

“You want to arrange it now? It’s hard. We need to practice your 1st album with the band for a week. There’s no time to practice the arranged version of the piano concerto.”

“That’s why I just played the piano like a crazy person. Seoul Symphony can perform in the original way. It’s perfect if the piano is played a little violently and an instrument is added in. We can change the stage effect to be more grand too.”

Jung Sae Myung could tell that Jun Hyuk already heard the completed music in his head.

“Sir, you’re the main. Speaking in terms of a band, it’s like if the first guitarist is also singing.”

“What? I’m the guitar and vocals? What are you.....?”

“You’re playing the piano and conducting. Like Daniel Barenboim.”

Daniel Barenboim is a Jewish pianist and conductor born in Argentina. He was such a piano prodigy that he was able to open a piano recital in Buenos Aires at a young age of 8. In 1967, he debuted as a conductor for London’s orchestra and was concurrently Chicago Symphony’s music director, and Berlin Staatskapelle Orchestra’s music director. He is currently Staatskapelle’s conductor for life and is acting as visiting conductor for various symphonies.

When he plays the piano as he conducts, he is reminiscent of composers in the Romantic age.

“What are you going to do if I’m playing the piano and conducting? Are you saying you won’t perform?”

“No. I’m thinking of being on a synthesizer keyboard to foster more excitement.”

First, he said that he wants to add drums into a piano concerto, and now electroacoustics? Jung Sae Myung is more and more curious about the completed song in Jun Hyuk’s head. However, the burden is also great. He finds Jun Hyuk’s sense of music and his having to play piano out of nowhere, burdensome.

“Since you were a pianist before you were a conductor... Didn’t you release albums as well?”

Jun Hyuk’s unconventional behavior and proposal were not entirely welcome to Jung Sae Myung. On top of that, is this not an improvised thought?

“Can I see the drum score first?”

With Jun Hyuk’s score, Jung Sae Myung had Grieg’s piano concerto in his head while he read the drum line with his eyes to combine the two.

He closed the score and met Jun Hyuk's eyes.

"And the synthesizer?"

"There's no need to make a separate score for that."

Jun Hyuk tapped his head with his finger. Jung Sae Myung still looks undecided, so he spoke again,

"It'd be better to hear it for yourself before you make a decision. Tara, get us a studio with drums and a synthesizer... Nevermind. I'll do it." Jun Hyuk rushed to call Jo Hyung Joong.

"Teacher. This is Jun Hyuk."

- Look who it is! Are preparations for the concert going well? We need to meet up before the concert.....

Jo Hyung Joong's welcoming voice came out of the phone. "Teacher. I'm in a rush, but can I use your studio for a moment?"

- Of course. I'll empty it out, so use it as much as you want.

"Thank you. We'll head over right away. I'll tell you in more detail once we're there. Can you tell me the address?"

- Sure. I'll text the address to this number, so go there.

Soon after, the phone rang with a text message.

"Tara. Tell the people you just called to come to this address."

Seeing Jun Hyuk so distracted out of excitement, Jung Sae Myung spoke to Tara,

"Ms. Butters, it must be hard to work with this friend."

"No, it's okay. Whenever there's an uproar like this, Jun has fun and presents new music. Maestro, you can anticipate that it'll be something good."

Tara smiled at Jung Sae Myung and busily got on the phone.



“Me? I’m going to be playing drums for the piano concerto too?”

“Why? You don’t think you can? Your sense of beat is incredible, so you can do it if you just focus on the drums.”

Kyung Min Ho was looking over the score without being able to hide his uneasiness. In the studio, the people in charge of administrating the concert were confused because they didn’t know what was happening, and the only people who could not smile were Kyung Min Ho and Jung Sae Myung.

“First, listen to it. Min Ho, prepare the drums. We’ll replace the piano concerto with a CD... Just see the overall feeling of it.”

Jo Hyung Joong made a fuss to quickly download Grieg’s piano concerto.

When the concerto came on with Jun Hyuk’s signal, Kyung Min Ho focused on the score and started playing the drums while Jun Hyuk played the keyboard. He did not know that he would use what he had learned during the audition program regarding electric sound, like this.

The newly arranged version of the piano concerto filled the studio and after 30 minutes, it ended with a sharp sound of the drums.

“What do you think? It’s not precise, but it’ll be this kind of feeling.”

Jun Hyuk looked over Jung Sae Myung’s expression. He has no intention of pushing this any further if Jung Sae Myung, the subject of this concert, is not satisfied. “Maestro Jun. Is this the new version you were talking about?”

“Yes.”

Jung Sae Myung was the most surprised. He already knew what the drums would be like because he saw the score. He had imagined how grand Jun Hyuk’s keyboard would be, but it was unexpected.

With more electroacoustics, the music becomes something with more and more MSG. People’s bodies move to the new color that the electroacoustics bring, but the music

is no longer there. This concert is not for a club.

On the contrary, Jun Hyuk was tempered and only appeared in the moments when a little was needed and only played a role in filling in the empty spaces.

The most important is the piano. It can be seen as a failed arrangement if the piano is overwhelmed. However, the piano melody stays sharp and it is the main of this version.

“Maestro, did you arrange it like this because of what I said? That we need to find an appropriate compromise between money and music?”

“No. The tickets are already sold out and the guarantee is decided, so the money doesn’t change with the arrangement.”

“Then, why? Isn’t this a song for rock maniacs?”

“I wanted to show people that they can easily enjoy classical music like they do pop music. The drums and synthesizer are actually bait. Bait to approach classical music.”

Jung Sae Myung perfectly understood the meaning of bait through music. If they bring out this bait, they can show the real image of classical music. When the concert is over and they hear Grieg’s concerto in the original version, they will not say that ‘classical music is a drag’.

“Don’t you think we can show them that conductors and pianists can look as cool as vocalists in rock bands do?”

Jun Hyuk gained confidence from Jung Sae Myung’s slowly brightening countenance.

“I want to show people that a maestro in a tuxedo is cooler than a rocker wearing flashy clothing.”

Jung Sae Myung burst out laughing when he said cooler than a rocker.

“Well that’s a relief. I was wondering if I would have to wear a leather jacket or something. Ha ha.”

Jung Sae Myung’s laughter indicated his agreement. Jun Hyuk started writing something on paper again. He wrote out what looked like a timetable for a long time.

"This is the piano concerto's impact timeline sheet. Reference this and think of the stage effect."

Concert officials took the paper that Jun Hyuk held out to them, and finally realized why they had been called to the studio.

"Alright. Is the music you're playing with the band changing as well? We already received the score for the orchestra."

"No, there's no change to that part."

The concert officials took the CD that recorded the music they just played, the timesheet Jun Hyuk made up, and left the studio to prepare the stage.

Jo Hyung Joong had rushed to the studio in a state of emergency and finally started greeting the people he was meeting for the first time, now that the noisy show time had passed.

And isn't Jo Hyung Joong the producer who created Jun Hyuk's 1st album?

Jung Sae Myung was lost in other thoughts over talking to people. As soon as he saw the piano in the studio, he sat in front and settled in.

When he was young, he swept all of the competitions and was the best pianist in Korea. As soon as he sat in front of the piano, the studio that had been full of laughter and conversations fell into silence.

Chapter 234

Jung Sae Myung began with the introduction, also called Greig's Sign.

He showed unbelievable dignity and the melody he brought out of the piano was overwhelming. The explosive and steeply descending chord brought out the lyricism of northern European Norway. The solid configuration and thought out tone provided ventilation for Norway's nature where the great wilderness and fjords breathe.

However, the original song's pure melody, fresh harmony, and vivid and youthful passion were nowhere to be found. Human's craving and taboo is shown in the movie , and Greig's piano concerto comes out during a moment of destruction of the person who breaks that taboo. But, Jung Sae Myung changed it into a scene of love.

In the long time that it took him to go from a young pianist to a conductor, Jung Sae Myung's piano technique may have gone backwards, but the texture is deeper.

“Is this enough?”

Jung Sae Myung finished playing and turned around to cheering. Jun Hyuk was included in this, but he did not look 100% satisfied.

“Sir, it's too sharp. It's frightening. Will the orchestra be able to endure it?”

“Didn't you say that I need to perform more wildly?”

A single word has different meanings for different people. Jun Hyuk did not say more because it is an interpretation and personal domain. Jung Sae Myung also shut his mouth when he saw Jun Hyuk's shaking eyes.

He could tell from Jun Hyuk's eyes that it was not the color that he had wanted. But Jung Sae Myung is not Jun Hyuk and he cannot play piano while copying him. Jun Hyuk will understand that those aspects that cannot be compromised come together to create a musician's personality.

“I'll have to go out and practice the piano a bit. I'm starting to get scared because I'm touching a keyboard for the first time in a while.”

Jung Sae Myung said goodbye to the people in the studio and left. He was not joking when he said that he was going to practice the piano.

“See me for a second?”

When Jung Sae Myung was leaving the studio, he called Jun Hyuk out and went to the roof where there were no people.

He took out a cigarette, held it out to Jun Hyuk, and put it in his mouth when Jun Hyuk rejected it. He took a few drags and then spoke carefully,

“Was the wildness you were referring to in terms of a dance song?”

“Yes. I thought you would already know”

“I know that the sharp and wildness you were talking about in the studio is different from me. I guess it’s right to say that I know but can’t do it. It could be the difference of a sheet of paper to me, but that difference will feel like a gap to you. But, what can we do? It’s a difference in ability.”

“Sir, it’s not to that point. An issue of direction.....” Jung Sae Myung shook his head.

“Not everyone can create the sound they want as freely as you can. That’s reality. I don’t know if you know, but there are a lot of people who don’t look kindly on you. And that includes me.”

Jun Hyuk thought that Jung Sae Myung has an honest personality, but this is too honest.

He laughed bitterly.

“Is that so? I didn’t feel it in the way you look at me... Is it because I’m not connected to the Korean music industry?”

“Is that what you thought? Of course, there will be such narrow-minded fools, but most of those people aren’t performers like us. They’re full of a privileged consciousness for enjoying classical music. People who mistake themselves for nobles in Europe.”

Jun Hyuk has a general idea of the type of people Jung Sae Myung is describing. But the thoughts and attentions of those kinds of people do not have any weight on Jun

Hyuk right now.

"That's not the real reason. You give people like us a taste of despair."

"Despair?"

Jun Hyuk's bitter smile disappeared and there was surprise in its place.

"Yeah. Music that only someone chosen like you can show us. It's domain that average people like me yearn to reach for all of our lives but can't. It's because you've gone into that place so easily."

Is it because of what he just said, 'I know but can't'? The bitter smile went from Jun Hyuk's face to Jung Sae Myung's.

"No. I'm not trying to talk about music, so don't mind it. So there's one thing I want to say. There's no way of knowing what shape that despair or jealousy people like us feel will take."

You didn't feel it from first class European maestros, right?"

"No. It seemed like most people thought of me as interesting."

"I'm sure. I don't know if there's a difference, but they're in the same bracket as you."

Jung Sae Myung let out cigarette smoke and the color of his face was not much different.

"Hm... this idle talk went on for too long."

"Oh, no, it's okay."

"This is what I wanted to say. Change the way that people like me look at you. From despair and jealousy to awe. With music that brings such awe that there's no room for something like jealousy. That's what I wanted to say to you when I was watching you today." Jung Sae Myung put his cigarette out.

"Anyway, I have as much expectation as I despair. Choral concerto, Inferno, aria solo song. It felt like I was falling into despair when I heard those songs, but they fall a little short to bring all people to awe. The experimental side is strong. Make sure you create

a masterpiece that jumps over all of this."

Jun Hyuk could not understand Jung Sae Myung, who was confessing his thoughts on him. It could have been what he wanted to say when they met, or his true thoughts of what he felt today.

"There will be a lot of talk regarding our concert. There are a lot of people who like to pick on faults. They won't come to the concert because there isn't VIP seating and they'll curse us out in front of a TV screen. Or will they curse on the inside? There's no one willing to curse you out with the atmosphere these days. Ha ha."

Jung Sae Myung pat Jun Hyuk's shoulder and laughed.



During rehearsals over a week, Kyung Min Ho's drums became more refined and Jung Sae Myung's piano sharpened.

When rehearsing the tracks on Jun Hyuk's 1st album, Alvin Lee did not hold back his praises for the Seoul Symphony. It is thanks to Jun Hyuk's arrangement, but also, because the orchestra blended perfectly into the band's music.

Because Jun Hyuk's 1st album holds a variety of genres, severe change was necessary for each song, but the Seoul Symphony handled that change easily.

A week's time flew by like an arrow. Mapo was full of noise from early in the morning on the day of the concert.

There were a lot of people who did not hesitate to wait more than 10 hours to find a spot close to the stage. They started entering the venue 3 hours before the concert, and a fierce battle for positions began inside the stadium.

The field inside the stadium was covered with a thick fabric to protect the grass. When they exceeded the maximum limit for people on the field, security guards used all of their strength to control the entrance while they neared show time.

When darkness started to set over, there was an announcement notifying them of the start of the concert and the stadium was just full of the sound of 80,000 people breathing.

The 80,000 people in eager anticipation clapped loudly when the orchestra appeared on the stage. The members had never performed in front of so many people and were both happy and surprised because of 80,000 people clapping, but they also started feeling nervous.

The orchestra members came up on the large screens installed all around the middle of the field. Jun Hyuk, Jung Sae Myung, and Kyung Min Ho entered soon after.

They bowed to the audience and went to their respective positions. People had been expecting Jung Sae Myung to stand at the podium, but he went to the piano, and Jun Hyuk went to the synthesizer. There was momentary gabbling, and then, greater applause exploded. With the audience's cheering as a signal, the lights on the stage went off.

Jung Sae Myung started Greig's Sign and numerous lights started coming on from above the stage. The lights above the dark stage felt like shooting stars, and expressed the piano melody as a visual. When Jun Hyuk's electronic sound and Kyung Min Ho's drum grew strong, the audience began to scream.

When they had entered the stage, people had expected elegant classical music because of the suits they were wearing. When the strong drum came out, however, they realized that their expectations had been off.

When a crossover version flowed over the stadium instead of traditional classical music, colorful lights shot out to the rhythm of the piano, drums, and electroacoustics. It is a piano concerto that continued into a 3rd part, but the audience thought that they were listening to 3 songs in succession. Not a single person felt like they were listening to a classical music show for 30 minutes.

Jung Sae Myung finished playing and his face looked flushed. People near him thought it was because of the lights, but his face was red without the lights. He had enjoyed an entirely different vehemence through the piano than he had during rehearsals.

This is because of a differently colored performance due to the excitement and cheering of an 80,000 person audience, and Jun Hyuk on the keyboard.

He put in the effort to let the audience enjoy the music through the best performance, and he was rewarded for that result through the clapping.

However, the young people in the stadium are not enjoying the music with their ears

and heads. They follow the music with their hearts, and Jung Sae Myung felt a new kind of excitement from such youthful fans who react in real-time.

The orchestra members got up from their seats and bowed to the audience. When they were about to leave the stage and let them know that the first part of the concert was over, there was sudden cheering that felt like it would explode out of the stadium.

Alvin Lee had run out onto stage.

"Maestro, throwing cold water on this passion would be stupid. We need to keep going without taking a break."

Alvin Lee whispered in Jung Sae Myung's ear. Jung Sae Myung was also taken aback because of the sudden appearance, but started laughing.

"Drag it out for just 2 minutes. We need time for the orchestra to change their scores."

Alvin Lee, as the leader of a rock band, knows how to lead the audience. A greeting starting with 'Good evening, Korea,' a few light jokes – something like saying that the song might be a mess because he is completely sober, but he never makes a mistake. And he kept checking Jung Sae Myung for a signal.

Alvin Lee held his hand high and counted on his fingers.

"One! Two! Three!"

The violin and Jun Hyuk's guitar played at the same time, Alvin Lee took the microphone stand and started running around the stage.

Jun Hyuk had not been wrong when he had anticipated most of the 80,000 people in the audience to be Alvin Lee's fans. When Alvin Lee's singing came out of the amps stacked like a wall, the same song came out onto the seats and field in Korean.

When the spirited metal music ended and the blues began, the orchestra filled the song's loose parts and showed the strength of arrangement. The orchestra did not differentiate between genres, and showed perfection of magnificence and weight and the audience was overwhelmed by that scale.

He does not reach the power of his heyday, but the depth of his passion has gotten deeper in his vocals. There was an atmosphere that Jun Hyuk would express as pale,

and there was a performance with tempered technique.

The bass solo that came in for moments as a time, were full of complex fingering and flashy technique as though showing Colin's thoughts on music.

Jun Hyuk's piano solo was fusion jazz that used stringed instruments, including the violin instead of the guitar. The acoustic guitar and even a ballad with Alvin Lee's voice.

10 songs finished within moments, and the performance had been like a storm. There are few songs to include in the concert repertoire, so 1 hour 30 minutes just flowed by.

The subjects of the concert, including Jun Hyuk, stood in one place, bowed, and after greeting the audience a few times, left the stage.

However, it was out of the question for the people who had waited for over 10 hours to leave like this. They clapped and stomped, shouting encore to the dark stage. There were those who folded and left the spectator seats, but not a single of the people filling the field leave.

Then, a spotlight came on and a chair and microphone stand appeared on stage. The audience swelled with anticipation. They are imagining Jun Hyuk singing while playing the guitar.

When the person wearing the tuxedo appeared on the large screens however, there was murmuring rather than cheering.

Colin walked out with a cello and sat down without saying anything. He set the microphone up and then started playing the cello.

A song that came out in countless TV advertisements. Bach's unaccompanied Cello Suites. He played Cello Suites without stopping for over 10 minutes from number 1 Prelude

(Moderato) in G major to Gigue (Vivace)'s 6 songs, cooling the audience's warmed up hearts.

Without flashy lighting, intense drumming, or a grand orchestra accompaniment, the cello's beautiful and calm melody filled the huge stadium and ended the first concert in Seoul.

Chapter 235

“Jun. How was the concert? Did you enjoy it?”

“Of course. It’s not only the audience that thought it was a pity that the concert was short. I regret it even more.”

When the last concert was over, President Stern handed a sweaty Jun Hyuk a towel.

When he saw that Jun Hyuk looked satisfied, he also felt satisfied.

“There’s going to be a party with the concert officials. There’s something I want to check before then.”

“Yes?”

“We’ll release today’s performance as a live album, but what do you think of releasing a studio album? Without the orchestra. The Korean version is the original, but I want to create a global version with Alvin Lee’s vocals.”

“It’s a good thought. I’ll arrange it again so it fits the band, so let’s start as soon as we get back to America.”

Jun Hyuk wiped his sweat with the towel and accepted President Stern’s suggestion without a moment’s hesitation. It is obvious that he really regretted the end of the concert.

“One more thing. The same 2 people for the bass and drums?”

“Don’t you think we need to? We performed together so we can’t tell them to fall out. And, there’s no reason to tell them not to do it when they have the talent. Why? Isaac, you don’t want to keep them?”

“No. I’m satisfied, too. Okay. Then, leave it to me.”

With Jun Hyuk’s response, President Stern had the employees go back.

Rather than something for the concert's leads to enjoy, the party in the hotel was for the people who worked hard in silence to create 2 perfect concerts.

The organizers on the Korean side worked really hard to meet President Stern's difficult requests, but they did earn a lot of money. Even if they paid Jun Hyuk and Alvin Lee huge guarantees, they made 3 to 4 times what the top idol groups in Korea would have made for them, so it is a night they could get drunk.

Jun Hyuk showed his face at the party, and then, he went into his room with his close acquaintances to drink wine and throw a party of their own.

"For me, the best was Colin's cello at the end. Even the audience didn't make the sound of their breathing. It was the best finale."

Yoon Kwang Hun did not hesitate to praise him. It was the best configuration for the end as the passion in the concert hall settled.

"Whose idea was this finale?"

"Isaac's. We only had 10 songs to perform with and it's obvious that the audience will think that's too short, so he decided that we need to cool their passion down before sending them away. That's why the calm bass of the cello came out."

While everyone was discussing the concert and having fun, Kyung Min Ho was just drinking beer.

It was heavy on his heart that the concert was over. Performing with world-renowned stars felt like a dream. It was hard to accept the reality that he now needs to go back to being just another drum session man. He felt even more sullen that no one seemed to care that he felt like this.

"Tara. Where are Isaac and Alvin?"

"Oh, I think Isaac had something to say to Alvin's manager. And, Alvin should be sleeping in his room. This is the first large-scale concert for him in a while, so it seems he was really tense. He said that he'd come after a nap."



“Studio album? Of course we’re down for it. Alvin won’t refuse it either. He’s already a fan of Jun. Ha ha.”

“Will there be any problem proceeding with it as soon as we get back to America?”
“Yes, that’s fine.”

“Then, our company will figure it out when we can start working in New York. I’ll write up the contract and send it over right away.”

President Stern ended his conversation with Alvin Lee’s manager and went back to Jun Hyuk’s room.

“Good. Everyone’s already here. I have news for everyone.”

When President Stern smiled brightly and announced the plan to produce a studio album, Kyung Min Ho was the most surprised.

“Jun Hyuk. So, you’re making another album with this concert? With me on the drums?”

“Yes. It’s exactly as President Stern said. He said we’re recording in New York, so you’ll have to pack up again.”

This dream did not end. It’s continuing. Kyung Min Ho slowly got up and went into the bathroom.

“He’s not going to cry of happiness, is he? Why is he going to the bathroom all of a sudden?”

Yoon Kwang Hun laughed as he spoke, and Baek Seung Ho clucked his tongue. “Oy. He’s emotional for the drummer of a rock band. It’s not cool.” Yoon Kwang Hun laughed for a bit and then got up.

“I’ll be going now. Everyone must be tired, so get some rest. Jun Hyuk, you leave tomorrow in the afternoon, right?”

“Yes. Will you come with us? Until the holidays...”

"It's fine. It's not good to follow a kid who's all grown up around. Just send me the album when it comes out."

It is a separation they always go through, but they're still not used to it and still regret it. Jun Hyuk eased his regrets by holding Yoon Kwang Hun's hands tightly.

"Oh. Kwang Hun, you go first. I still have stuff to talk about with Jun Hyuk as his lawyer."

"Really? Alright. Don't bother him too much and hurry."

Yoon Kwang Hun left and Baek Seung Ho took Jun Hyuk into the bedroom.

"Did you figure out what we talked about last time?"

"Yes. Hang on."

Jun Hyuk opened a drawer next to his bed and took out a sheet of paper. Baek Seung Ho read through it. There is not a lot of content, so it took less than a minute to understand all of it. Baek Seung Ho put the paper down and let out a long sigh.

"So this is what you want?"

"Yes."

"Well... I'm sure it'll be alright. And don't forget that you can change it whenever you want to. Call me as soon as possible when you do change your mind..."

"Yes. But, I don't think it will change."

Baek Seung Ho returned the paper to Jun Hyuk and said,

"I'll come back tomorrow morning with an official will."

"Excuse me? Official?"

"Yeah. A will is invalid if it doesn't follow the legal process precisely. And you need a witness. It'll be over quickly because it's not anything difficult."

Baek Seung Ho was about to leave the bedroom when he turned around all of a sudden.

"Oh right. I'm sure I'll come to know, but I'm curious... Can I ask how much the guarantee you got for this concert is?"

"Yes. You'll find out anyway. I heard it's \$4 million."

"\$4... 4 million? Wow!"

Baek Seung Ho's jaw dropped and Jun Hyuk giggled.

"Why? Is it too much? Should I change what's on the will? He he."



Early the next morning, Baek Seung Ho came back to Jun Hyuk with 2 lawyers. When they made a fuss setting up a camcorder, Jun Hyuk looked puzzled.

"You need 2 witnesses for a will. There's really no need to record it, but we're just trying to keep all grounds covered. Are you ready?"

Baek Seung Ho turned at the 2 lawyers and they pressed the record button on the camcorder.

"Alright, Mr. Jang Jun Hyuk. Please say the content of the will out loud."

Jun Hyuk looked at the sheet and said what is on his mind, and Baek Seung Ho wrote everything Jun Hyuk said verbatim.

Baek Seung Ho handed the complete will over to Jun Hyuk.

"Please read the content again loudly."

Jun Hyuk took the sheet and read through it slowly.

"Is this aligned with your thoughts?"

"Yes."

"Then, please sign at the bottom."

After Jun Hyuk signed, Baek Seung Ho and the other 2 lawyers signed as witnesses.

Baek Seung Ho took the tape that had recorded this and the content of the will, put it in an envelope, and sealed it.

“It’s over. You did well. You guys as well. You can go now.”

When the 2 lawyers stood around awkwardly, Baek Seung Ho tapped his forehead.

“Oh right, I forgot. Jun Hyuk. Can you give them each a signature? And take a picture. I promised them this.”

The 2 lawyers held out Jun Hyuk’s CD and, after he signed and took pictures, the 2 men bowed their heads and left.

“But, who are those people?”

“Lawyers I work with. You need 2 witnesses, other than me as the person writing your will, to sign. And you don’t need to worry whether they’ll tell the others what’s on the will because they’re both lawyers.”

“Thank you for everything.”

“Thanks for what. It’s my job. Don’t hesitate to call me if you need anything. Got it?” Baek Seung Ho gave Jun Hyuk a big hug and left.

The airport was full of reporters and fans to see Jun Hyuk and his group as they were leaving the country. They gave a short interview, thanked the fans, and boarded the private plane to New York.

Chapter 236

“Mr. Stern. The calls haven’t ended since the concert in Korea. There are a lot of promoters who say they want to push Alvin’s performance.”

“I’m sure. It’s the first large-scale performance since Alvin’s resurgence.”

As soon as Alvin Lee’s manager got back to New York, he looked for President Stern. Since the concert in Seoul ended, foreign press put up articles titled Alvin Lee’s perfect resurrection. Excluding the distinctiveness that it is Korea, it is definite that the attention would go to Alvin Lee who is already a legend in the pop music industry, than to Jun Hyuk.

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“The success of the Korean concert is from a collaboration between Jun and Alvin, but Alvin’s ticket power is greater in Europe and America.”

“Yes. The concert planners are also thinking of a big-scale show like there was in Korea.”

“Then you can go ahead and proceed as long as Alvin accepts. Why are you going through the effort to tell me.....?”

“Well... Alvin said that he wouldn’t turn down a concert if it’s with Jun. He says that he doesn’t want to do a solo performance if it’s going to be so noisy.”

President Stern had guessed why Alvin Lee’s manager had come looking for him, so he showed a little smile.

“Hm... What exactly does performing with Jun mean?”

“Well. First is that it means Jun’s performance is perfect. He was the only guitarist who brought out a sound that he could be satisfied with, and didn’t he arrange the

configuration of all the songs? And it means that Jun's music is good."

"So that means he wants to keep doing concerts with Jun and his music."

"Yes, but we don't know Jun's future plans. The show in Seoul was a one-shot event... And Jun is a maestro no matter what people say."

"Ha ha. It's not like that. Jun isn't a maestro, but a musician. He is a free musician, who is not tied down to any one genre. Alright. I'll ask Jun what he thinks. I just play the role of a mother who does whatever Jun wants."



"What do you think?"

"It's a really interesting proposal. But Isaac. How many times do you think we need to do that performance?"

"I'm guessing at least 3 times? After that, I'm sure it'll be based on how the performances go? If all 3 are successes, we need to consider a world tour."

When Jun Hyuk spoke up again after thinking for a while, President Stern clapped. Jun Hyuk had given the response that he had wanted.

"I have a condition. Turn it down if they want to perform with Alvin's old songs. I have no intention of acting as the band in the background while Alvin sells memories with his fans as targets."

"Great! That's it. That's what I'm thinking, too."

"I'll create an album with Alvin to release. We can do the performances with that album."

"Then we can create the global version of your 1st album and a new album. Great!"

President Stern took the calendar on top of the table and started checking off dates.

"When can you be done with what you're recording now?"

"One month maximum."

“I’m sure you’re thinking of writing all of the new songs within that period?”

“I can finish up the composition by tomorrow if I need to. The lyrics are the problem.”

“Alvin for the lyrics?”

“Yes. Alvin is better for lyrics than the songs.”

Jun Hyuk revealed his thoughts on Alvin’s blues songs since he made a comeback. This is why he had not wanted to perform with Alvin’s songs.

“Fine. Then we’ll release what you’re recording now and then release the new album. I’ll make both into mega hits, no matter how much money goes into marketing. The performance will come after. Okay?”

President Stern put his palm out and Jun Hyuk laughed as he gave him a high five.



“Colin. I’m releasing an album with Alvin.”

“What album? The one we just finished recording, that you’re wrapping up... Oh. Is it a new album?”

“Yeah. We’re going into the new one as soon as post-production is done for this one.”

When Colin heard about the new album, he felt excitement and was worry at the same time.

He knows that Jun Hyuk brought it up to him because he wants to work on it together.

The music he created with Jun Hyuk always brought him a new kind of happiness, but this also meant that it pushed back the time he works on his own music.

“New work... Isn’t it done if you write the songs and record? It’s an honor for me if I participate in that album.”

“No, we need to think about performing after releasing the album. Alvin can’t perform alone after releasing the album.”

"Then that means I can't do my personal work until then?"

"Yeah. And you'll have to leave your musical views aside. I'm going to make the music the way I want to. Of course I'll interfere with the way you play."

"Then that means you're going to produce the album, too."

"Of course."

"Alvin said he'll follow your directing as well?"

"He actually welcomed it. It seems he thinks he'll be able to take a thorough look at me."

Colin accepted without another thought. This could even be a great opportunity in forming his own band. His name needed to have more value in order for him to be able to recruit members with the ability he was looking for.

Amateurs may not, but professional performers gather in because of the name. This was evident just from looking at Jun Hyuk smiling in front of him. With Jun Hyuk now, there was no musician who would not come running at a single motion from him.

"What did the drummer say? I'm sure he'll say okay."

"Yeah. He won't miss out on the chance to show himself outside of Korea."

Jun Hyuk looked at Colin for a moment and said what he had felt faintly,

"Colin. If you like the drummer, say what you feel honestly and make a proposal. His drum skills are developing even now. He isn't famous because of the barrier of being Asian, but I'm sure thoughts on him will change if he gets to do a world tour. Then you'll just be one out of several options. If you want to get him, this is your chance."

"I want to do that, too. But I'm just one of many bands that can't guarantee him anything. Do you think he'll take it?"

"Well you won't know until you ask."

Jun Hyuk silently tsked at Colin as he hesitated. Colin was so bold as to quit Clayton, which was extremely difficult to get into, but he was being timid with such matters. He couldn't understand.



"Alvin. There are 2 ways for us to write the songs. The first is for you to write lyrics after I'm done composing."

"And the 2nd?"

"You give me key phrases or approximate lyrics first. I'll write a song that fits that. Then you create complete lyrics with that song."

"So the difference is whether we write lyrics that fit the songs or songs that fit the lyrics."

"Yes."

Alvin said that he would follow Jun Hyuk's lead while writing the songs in everything except lyrics, so he frowned at this inevitable situation.

"What are you thinking?"

"I like the 2nd."

"You'll write the song to the lyrics?"

"Yes. But I want honest lyrics. If you want to make songs that are fluffy and comfortable for people to listen to, it's better for me to focus on the melody."

"Honest lyrics... What is it that you want?"

Jun Hyuk had said that he would leave the lyrics entirely up to him. But it felt like he just said he was rejecting average lyrics.

"The sound of the honest truth that's hidden in your heart."

"The sound that's hidden in my heart?"

Alvin's heart felt a little twinge at the way Jun Hyuk was looking at him.

"The forgotten sound that's the buried and hidden truth. If you have the will to hear that sound, you can hear it whenever you want to. And you'll be wanting it to come out."

Jun Hyuk's eyes wanted him to create lyrics with the truth that only he knows.

"I want to release the album quickly. While you write the lyrics for several months, I have to hang out during that time... I don't really like that. Try listening to the sound that's hidden in your heart. Then you'll be able to write multiple lyrics in a day."

"You want to expose my face to the public buying the album? Isn't that too much? Do you have the confidence to do that?"

"I already showed mine. Through music."

"Well well. Isn't that too shrewd? How many people out there are able to figure out someone's true self through an instrument or orchestra? I have to do it through words, that everyone can understand. With words and sentences! It's completely different."

Jun Hyuk smiled and said,

"Don't think of it as being too unfair. Everyone just uses the method that works best for them. I do it through melody and you through words and sentences."

"Look here. I know how to create great melodies, too."

"But that doesn't mean we can switch roles."

Jun Hyuk kept smiling, and Alvin laughed as well.

"You're more sly than I thought. I think wanting to release the album fast is just an excuse, and you really just want to see the true me?"

Jun Hyuk nodded and whispered,

"An honest sound is the standard for the birth of a great song."

A long story was already swimming around Alvin Lee's head from his heart.

"1 week. Okay?"

"3 days is enough. It's easy if you just write down what your heart is saying. If you hang on for no reason, you'll just edit it for the remaining 4 days and damage the original meaning. Alvin, this could be the last opportunity."

“Wait. Last opportunity? What does that mean?”

“If not now, when will I be able to work with you on music? Take this chance to let the public hear your real story. I’ll put your story into incredible music.”

Jun Hyuk tapped his heart and winked. After Alvin left the studio, he reappeared in exactly 3 days.

Alvin handed over a stack of handwritten papers rather than computer printouts, but his expression was not bright.

“Jun, don’t say anything about the lyrics. Nothing is for show and there’s no pretense, and it just has what I wanted to say.”

Jun Hyuk did not say anything, and slowly read through Alvin’s story.

Alvin’s lyrics did not follow the conventional format of a song at all. It was too long to say that he only wrote the key topics yet lacked a format like a chorus and refrain, and was more like a completed poem.

There are some forms of prose and even what look like short proverbs.

Jun Hyuk read over 15 pages of lyrics, sighed, and mumbled in Korean.

“Damn. Life is fucked.”

They were words that Alvin couldn’t understand, but he could tell how Jun Hyuk felt from his expression and tone.

“Stop saying things I can’t understand, and hurry up and write the song. You have to do that so I can trim the lyrics appropriately.”

“No. I’m going to make the song so not a single word is added or taken out. We need to preserve the entire coarseness. You wrote this over 3 days? Then I’ll complete it within 3 days as well.”

Jun Hyuk took the sheets with the lyrics and locked himself in the studio in his apartment.

Chapter 237

What I remember is that I did not drink even a drop of water.

All that went into my mouth was cheap whiskey and I took the rest in through my nose.

When the white cocaine powder on my mustache fell, I realized that the woman with the smooth skin lying next to me was not my wife. My wife's skin is not tight and black, but crisp and white.

.....

My wife held back her vomit as she washed me, washing away not only the vapors of my body but also her love through her fingers.

She started to enjoy washing the smooth body of a friend who loved her more than she liked washing my dirty body.

Alvin Lee sang slow and calm to Jun Hyuk's acoustic guitar fingering. When the song ended after 3 minutes, Alvin Lee's manager was clenching both fists.

Of Alvin Lee's songs up to now, none were so alluring. The lyrics did get to him a little, but he is sure that Alvin Lee's voice and the melody dominating the music will be able to cover that drawback.

The following 11 songs were over, but no one could speak for a while. President Stern was the one to break the aftertaste of the music.

"Jun. You didn't make all of the songs with just an acoustic guitar accompaniment, did you?"

"No. This is the acoustic version. Of course there's a band version."

Alvin Lee could guess why he created 2 versions.

"Isaac, don't be too surprised. I think Jun created the acoustic version for me. Is that

right?"

"Yes. I heard you like small shows, so I wrote it to fit that so you can perform it in the future. What do you think? Did you like it?"

Alvin Lee hugged Jun Hyuk instead of responding. He has not heard the band version yet, but his story has been captured with just one guitar.

A feast of verses; where a hook should have followed the intro. There were times when the songs ended at the climax (bridge) and those that went into the outro. They are songs that are difficult to get used to, but not music that will flash popularity and then fade away.

When the aftertaste of Alvin Lee's voice disappeared, the people who quickly came back to reality were those at the record label.

"Alvin. Do you have any intentions to edit the lyrics a little?"

Everyone had been lost in the music and remembered something they had all been forgetting. The references to drugs, swearing, and sex pose great disadvantages when receiving TV ratings for the music video.

Getting a rating of TV-MA (programs that are inappropriate for children under 17) poses a big minus to marketing.

"Of course I don't. Jun wrote the music without touching a single word, so we can't change it for a music video."

The record label officials seemed not to have much expectation when they asked. They shrugged and smiled bitterly without asking any further.

"Fine. With a song like this, the music video can't act as an excuse for low sales. Jun, when can you be done with recording?"

President Stern spoke fervently. He has certainty from experience.

"We can be done by November."

"Then let's release it in December for the Christmas season."

People are reluctant to release albums in December in America. The Grammy awards, which open every February, announce the candidate list in November. Albums released after the nominations are announced can be considered for the next year's awards, but they are normally buried because attention has withered over time.

"Wouldn't sometime around March be better? It's hard for anything other than carol albums to get popular in December..."

"Trust me. I'll make it so we'll be preparing for a world tour starting in March."

No one spoke further because of President Stern's confident voice.

When Colin and Kyung Min Ho were exhausted from Jun Hyuk's constant criticism and directing, a whopping 3 albums came out to the world.

The jazz album with Lee Carlton and Stanley Clarke 'The Second', came out as a double album, and the Seoul concert was released as "JUN & Alvin in Seoul" with a live video.

The English version of Jun Hyuk's 1st album came out with just his name 'JUN' on the album jacket.

One part of why President Stern planned to release in December was because of the effect that having Jun Hyuk's albums come out in succession could have, but also because it is a big event.



"Maestro! It's been a while."

"Jun. I heard you've been busy these days working on your album. Are you home now?"

The welcome voice heard on the phone is New York Philharmonic's standing conductor, Dimitri Carras.

"Yes. I'll be going to the studio soon. Do you have anything in particular that you need? Should I go to Lincoln Center?"

"No. I would have gone to your apartment if something was up. I called to let you know

of something in advance. Don't be surprised when you leave your house today. Ha ha."

"Excuse me? What are you talking about?"

"You'll know when you go out. Then let's both wrap up our busy schedules and meet up soon."

Jun Hyuk left the house with Dimitri Carras' laughter and talk about their busy schedules running through his mind. He greeted the few fans waiting outside the apartment and got in the car waiting for him.

As the car went through New York City, he could see placards stuck all over the city. The placards and posters are what Carras had been talking about.

"Alright... Hang on! Stop the car for a second."

Carras' warning not to be too surprised was of no use. Jun Hyuk stopped the car and examined a placard hanging on a street lamp.

The date of the concert is December 23rd, and it clearly says that it will be performed in the work's entirety. There was even a fine print at the bottom of the placard that said 'Orchestra members will not be utilizing expedients such as headphones or earphones.'

Jun Hyuk got back into the car and laughed, and the driver spoke as he looked at Jun Hyuk through the back mirror.

"They started popping up on the streets starting last night. The New York Philharmonic's concert will be a performance of your song, right Maestro?"

"Yes. It's a performance that I failed as well."

"Is it really as the rumors say? There's nonsense that the music causes pain... Oh. Sorry, Maestro."

The driver cleared his throat and hastily took a look at Jun Hyuk, but Jun Hyuk shook his head and laughed.

"No no, it's okay. I'm starting to hear nonsense as well. It could just be noise for all we know. Ha ha."

Jun Hyuk thought of a good holiday gift to give the driver in his 40s.

"If I give you tickets, will you go with your wife to see if it's true or nonsense?"

"Oh, is that for real? Thank you, Maestro. Actually, I also bought the CD and listened to it out of curiosity... but it was just full of weird sounds. I was wondering what the difference would be in the actual performance."

Jun Hyuk saw him smiling brightly from the surprise gift, and took out his phone.

"Isaac. Did you know about the New York Philharmonic's Inferno performance?"

"Of course. What do you think? Isn't it impressive?"

Over the phone, Isaac's voice was delighted as though there was nothing better. Following the the New York Philharmonic's official announcement this morning, the press' calls went to Stern Corporation instead of the New York Philharmonic.

Even though it had been announced that the conductor will be Dimitri Carras, they asked about whether Jun Hyuk would be conducting and for comments. There were even reporters who asked about the backstory of Jun Hyuk's role as the original composer.

Each time, they were able to promote Jun Hyuk's album, saying that he would be focusing solely on that album for release on the 23rd. It seemed that the New York Philharmonic's concert and Jun Hyuk's new album would fill the news.

"Isaac, did you see rehearsals? Did they really complete the whole song?"

"I wasn't allowed to enter either. No one is watching rehearsals. But there's no way the New York Philharmonic would be releasing false advertising."

"Maestro Carras is really impressive."

"I don't know. I'm skeptical. I heard that the interpretation is unconventional. It'll likely be very different from your Inferno album."

Jun Hyuk liked it more that the New York Philharmonic's music may not come out the way he intended for it to be. The attention of a great maestro is an honor in itself.

“I’m looking forward to it, however they perform it.”

“Anyway, the New York Philharmonic’s concert is providing amazing promotion for our album. Watch the news tonight. I’m pretty sure there will be more talk on the new album. Ha ha.”

Chapter 238

Colin and Kyung Min Ho waited for Jun Hyuk in the studio while focusing on practicing. Alvin Lee worked until late last night, finishing the recording for all 12 songs.

Alvin Lee's lyrics started with his suddenly rising as a star while not being able to adjust to the change in his surroundings, and continued into an unstable time. With making more money than he could handle as the background.

The time he spent in the madness of alcohol, sex, and drugs as well as his time in rehabilitation with pain and ruin. Then his return as a normal person. The 12 songs were made with his true thoughts as a musician.

The music needed to be light rather than flashy to truthfully deliver the lyrics' contents, so the result was blues, folk, and alternative rock.

For the 2 performers who long for the flashiness however, Jun Hyuk created 3 bonus tracks. Drums, bass, and guitar. The music placed each instrument at the front.

“Min Ho. You’re ready, right?”

Kyung Min Ho, alone in the recording booth, had headphones on and held up his drumsticks to signal okay.

“Then the music is going out. We’re starting now.”

As it is said that recording each instrument separately to mix later is not true band music, they recorded the 12 songs all at once.

But to preserve each person’s individuality for the instrumentals, Jun Hyuk did not even create scores for the bass and drum parts and left it entirely up to the two of them. Today’s recording was for them to play as they want to, and they were pouring out all of their workmanship to their liking.

If they just finish today’s recording and the mixing, Jun Hyuk and Alvin Lee’s album will be revealed to the world. President Stern and the record label need to spend their days busily from now on.



The new director from England, Louis O'Connell, had swept up all of the major film festivals with an experimental independent film. He listened to a CD with written on it, on repeat all day.

He had been opposed when he first received the proposition to produce the music video. He wanted to dedicate his attention to the Hollywood masterpiece he was currently in the last shooting of.

However, he could not refuse the record label when they even came directly to his house to ask if he would at least listen to the music. When he heard the CD in the car on his way to the filming location, he was so shocked that he could not focus on driving.

He had a gut feeling that the record would occupy Billboard charts through the first half of the next year and would take over the global market. Not a single song had been inserted for assortment, and they were all so good that each could be promoted as the title song. On top of that, the honest lyrics tugged at his heartstrings so much that he had the desire to make them into a movie.

He spent the entire day lost in Jun Hyuk's music, and called the record label.

"Did Alvin Lee make the songs for this album himself?"

"No. Alvin only wrote the lyrics. The composer is Jun... Do you by chance know who he is?"

"Jun? The person who conducted the New York Philharmonic... the Korean kid who wrote Inferno? No, Maestro?"

"Yes. He's the composer and took over the producing as well. Would you believe it if I told you he made the album's 15 songs in just 3 days? He played the guitar himself as well."

It is not rare for people to find sudden inspiration and write amazing songs within 1 or 2 hours. But he has never heard of someone making an entire album in 3 days, and finds it hard to believe.

"Wasn't that Jun in classical music? Oh right. He released a jazz album too, didn't he?"

"Yes. He's the only maestro who isn't tied down by genres."

"I heard he's one of the geniuses who may or may not appear every 100 years... I guess it was true."

Louis O'Connell recalled how he felt when he first heard the CD for Inferno. He had not been able to get past the 1st part due to his fear or the unknown rather than pain.

"Ha ha. I see you like the album, Director. We have tremendous expectations as well."

The record label official seems to be anticipating Louis O'Connell's consent to directing the music video because of the way he is stuttering.

"Fine. I'll direct the music video. And I don't need a cent for the production fee. Instead, I have a condition... no, a request."

Louis O'Connell slowly voiced his request, not condition.



Jun Hyuk's band members finished up the studio work and started their busy schedules with the album jacket shoot, promotion, and press interviews.

"Jun. An interesting proposal came in."

Tara quietly called Jun Hyuk out in the middle of a promotion poster shoot.

"We're planning on making 3 songs into music videos, but the director is saying something unexpected. He's asking you to take on the music for the movie he's directing right now."

"Huh? Movie?"

"So you'd become the music director for that movie. It would take about a month and a half because the filming is going to end soon and then they'll be editing. Then work on the music would start because you'll have to make the music while watching the movie."

Jun Hyuk listened to Tara's explanation and just blinked because he did not understand.

“Well... That director turned down the music videos at first because of his own movie, but he fell in love after listening to this album. And when he heard that you’re the composer, he made a formal request.”

“Why me? There are a lot of greats for film music.”

“Of course it’s because he fell for your music. And there’s the effect of Inferno.”

“What about Inferno all of a sudden?”

“The movie that he’s making now is a horror thriller. If he’s heard Inferno, is there any musician more appropriate? And the movie’s attribute music needs to come out quickly. I’m sure the fact that this album coming out in 3 days played a factor.”

The first item that a movie producer makes demands to a music director is time. The music needs to be created within the given time no matter what, because allocation and release schedules have already been decided.

Most cases of shooting are when they do not follow the schedules. The edited film goes to the music director in a tight moment, and the music director needs to compose, play, and record with a time limit.

Ennio Morricone handled this kind of murderous schedule to create music for over 500 films, and they were all famous. He is a great who can be called a great.

“A movie... Tara, what do you think?”

“Me? It’s simple. Watch the movie first and then make your decision. Isn’t it obvious? If you watch the movie and you want to make the music, do it. If not, you can turn it down. Like I always tell you, do what your heart says.”

Tara showed curiosity, but she told Jun Hyuk the best way to decide.



“I took a hit. He wants to make up his mind after watching the movie?”

“You think that’s it? If he decides to do it, we need to pay up a ton of money. And Stern Corporation will take all of the copyrights. Jun gets millions for a single concert. We

need to give him an amount that's proportional to that."

Director Louis O'Connell's manager recalled the amount that Stern's side demanded and shook his head.

"What did the production company say?"

"Of course they're for it. They were prepared to accept any conditions. They're probably thinking that they'll make back the money in promotions if Jun is the music director. And....."

The manager looked over Louis O'Connell's expression.

"Louis. If you look from an objective viewpoint, it's right that you ask him. He's easily called the 21st century Beethoven, and he's already a verified maestro. You're just a promising new director with a sense of production. You know who needs to come in bowing, right?"

Louis O'Connell let out a long sigh at the reality that his manager said.

"Damn it. I hate clinging to others."

"Then look for a different music director. Aren't there are a lot of good people?"

"You didn't listen to Inferno, did you? That music is scarier than hundreds of horror movies. I thought Jun took years to create a piece because he rarely releases music as a composer. But that wasn't the case. He's incredibly prolific, and he just doesn't release the music. How can I look for someone else when he can make the music for my movie in 2 or 3 days?"

His manager is right. As he spoke, he was able to figure out why he needs to be the one clinging to Jun Hyuk.

"Shall I set up a meeting? Oh right. First, accept the music video no matter what. The meeting needs to be a place for us to ask him to be the music director. Don't ruin it by talking about a give and take situation or something like that."

Louis O'Connell decided to listen to his resourceful manager. Hadn't he made it all the way to Hollywood thanks to this manager?

A few days later, Louis O'Connell went to Jun Hyuk's apartment. He was surprised that it was simple compared to the large Beverly Hills houses that stars live in.

"I heard that you're still filming the movie. I'm sorry to have made you come all the way to New York."

"It's nothing. Aren't you busier than I am? There isn't much time left before your album comes out, is there?"

"Fortunately, we have Alvin who does the other activities heartily. The fans want Alvin more than they want me."

Director Louis O'Connell praised him on the new album and then started bringing up the movie.

"Do you watch movies often?"

"No. Occasionally? I watched them often when I was in Korea, but I haven't gone to the movies since I came to America. All I do is watch a few times on cable TV."

"What's the last movie you saw?"

Jun Hyuk touched his chin to think for a moment and frowned.

"I don't remember the title... but it was a movie with Angelina Jolie. Something about a group of assassins that could make bullets bend?"

"Wanted?"

"Oh, that's right. Wanted. It aired on cable TV a few days ago."

When Director Louis O'Connell found out that Jun Hyuk rarely watches movies, he started to get nervous. Could his request to watch the movie before making a decision be his way of a mild refusal?

"And if you review that movie's music?"

"The overall configuration was good, but the use of the full orchestration was a bit immature. Seven theme songs were made into four variations, but the orchestra version fell short. The piano and electric sound were good."

Louis O'Connell had been expecting a simple answer of good or bad, and let out a low exclamation.

"Ah... Musicians really do analyze the soundtrack when they watch movies."

Chapter 239

Louis O'Connell's eyes were full of curiosity when he spoke,

"I heard that you remember all music if you hear it once. Do you remember for movies as well?"

"Ha ha. No. I can remember the music, but not the movies. So I have trouble remembering scenes with only dialogue and no music."

"Then you remember all of the music in the movie?"

"Yes. That's easy. If the music and video are not in harmony, it's hard to focus on the movie because of the bothersome music."

Louis O'Connell felt his heart pound faster. Jun Hyuk brought up the perfect harmony between video and music that all directors seek. He asked Jun Hyuk the most important question,

"Do you have standards on film music?"

"Hm... I'm sure the audience can't feel the music when they watch a movie. Music is a way to support the video message. The visuals become overwhelmed if the music is too strong. But it needs to be good to listen to as a separate track."

Louis O'Connell realized that the perfect music director is sitting across from him. He spoke cautiously with a trembling heart.

"Filming ends soon. I'll end the editing quickly and send it over. I hope you won't turn it down even if the movie falls short a bit."

"I heard you're an incredible director. You're being too modest. I'm also anticipating it because it seems like it'll be fun work."

Jun Hyuk's response basically means that he has come halfway to accepting. Louis O'Connell's face brightened.

"But can you tell me who the main actor is?"

"I guess you don't want entertainment programs on TV. It's all been announced. It'll be Anne Hathaway, Joseph Gordon Levitt, and Robert De Niro."

Jun Hyuk's eyes sparkled. Louis O'Connell knew what it meant.

"Shall I arrange for a dinner or something? If you would like that, I mean."

"Oh, is that for real? Is that possible?"

The seriousness had gone away and his excitement at the possibility of meeting Hollywood stars is him as an average person in his 20s. Louis O'Connell laughed and took out his phone.

"Hang on. Let me ask about Anne's schedule."

"What? Anne? Anne Hathaway?"

"Yes."

Jun Hyuk grimaced and waved his hand.

"Oh no, I don't know that woman well. I was talking about Robert De Niro. 'Raging Bull,' 'Godfather II,' 'Goodfellas'. And the real masterpiece, 'Taxi Driver'!"

When Jun Hyuk started listing movies that came out before he was born, Louis O'Connell's eyes widened. Most people in their 20s do not remember Robert De Niro in 'Taxi Driver' unless they are film fanatics.

There is no way for Louis O'Connell to know that Jun Hyuk's cultural life began with Yoon Kwang Hun, a man in his 40s.



The synopsis and script that Louis O'Connell provided, created waves in record marketing. His plans were done with special effects for a documentary, filming outside without a set.

Since there was not much time for the record label and director, there was a way to

work as quickly as possible.

It took 2 days to film a music video that was barely 4 minutes long. Jun Hyuk and the band had to stand in front of a blue screen and keep changing their clothes while singing the same song dozens of times.

Excluding Alvin who has a lot of experience, the 3 of them had fun in the beginning but started to get tired and annoyed after a little time passed.

“Jun Hyuk, I’m sorry.”

“About what?”

Kyung Min Ho suddenly apologized to Jun Hyuk in the middle of filming.

“I secretly cursed you for your meticulous directing while we recorded. But you were nothing compared to that director.”



There were 2 big events in New York on December 23. One was the New York Philharmonic’s year end concert and the other was the showcase for Alvin Lee and Jun Hyuk’s album.

The main person for the album is Alvin Lee, so Jun Hyuk made sure not to miss out on the New York Philharmonic’s concert. Half of the interest in the New York Philharmonic’s show is about Jun Hyuk, so it is also a good opportunity for promotion.

Reporters were camped outside Lincoln Center Avery Hall, waiting for Jun Hyuk.

Jun Hyuk is the only person that they absolutely need to get an interview from today. This is because each city’s maestros had not been able to attend because of their own year end concerts.

When Jun Hyuk’s limousine arrived at the concert hall, reporters encircled it and started pressing the camera shutters. The middle-aged couple that got out first took in the flashing cameras with confused expressions, and the reporters did not look much different either.

“Are you with Maestro Jun?”

“Excuse me, but what is your relationship?”

The couple hesitated and could not respond to the reporters' questions, while Jun Hyuk and Tara got out of the car and the microphones were directed to them.

“Maestro. Will you first tell us your thoughts on today's show?”

“First, I'd like to thank Maestro Carras and the New York Philharmonic. Though it's a song that I wrote, I have never been able to perform it properly. I did record it, but that was through shortcuts.”

Jun Hyuk laughed and looked around at the reporters.

“I'll be sitting back and comfortably enjoying that song for the first time today. Of course I am happy.”

“There's a showcase going on in Manhattan today. Please say something about your new album.”

“Um... You'll be able to hear Alvin's honest singing. The music is as great as today's performance will be.”

Jun Hyuk's group got through the reporters and went into the concert hall. There was not a single empty seat, and it was evident that the hall was full of curiosity regarding the music rather than expectation.

The orchestra members' expressions were bright as they walked out on stage. As it said on the placards, they were not wearing headphones or earphones.

Moments later, conductor Carras entered to passionate cheering. Dimitri Carras smiled and greeted the audience before standing on the podium.

At that moment, most of the audience gulped and held their armrests tightly. They are preparing to face and endure the music.

As soon as the conductor's baton moved, the stringed instruments' uneasy sound started to come out lightly. As soon as the strings' melody began, Jun Hyuk's eyebrows wriggled.

After almost 3 minutes, Jun Hyuk realized exactly what Dimitri Carras meant when he said that he is looking at the music objectively and from a third party's view.

Looking around, people in the audience were frowning. There were also those staring blankly with their mouths open, focusing on the stage. It is an entirely different scene from when Petrenko conducted the 1st part with Berlin Philharmonic, and everyone left their seats without being able to withstand it.

The music did not cause pain. It was just uncomfortable. There were times when everything in front of them looked blood red or as though a demon form was present, but the audience seemed to know precisely that that is an illusion.

When the 1st part was over after more than 10 minutes, sighing could be heard from everywhere in the audience. However, not a single person left their seat.

When the 2nd part began, Jun Hyuk wanted to clap loudly. Since Inferno was revealed to the world, this is the first time that the 2nd part is being performed in a concert hall.

Unlike Jun Hyuk's recorded CD, the tempo changed. Unexpected parts were speedy, and moments that needed to pass by like a storm were weak and slow, changing the parts that needed to be endured with difficulty. It even felt like he was breathtakingly following the limitations of permissibility from the score.

Conductor Carras finished performing until the 4th part, and did not move while holding onto the podium handrail. The orchestra members also had their heads down and were panting.

When the conductor did not turn around, there were short bursts of clapping among the silent audience, and then everyone stood up to start clapping. It is not an enthusiastic cheering however. It was encouragement for the toil that the New York Philharmonic had gone through.

This reaction is the general audience's evaluation of Jun Hyuk's Inferno. It is difficult and interesting music, but there is no philosophical message or emotional charge. It is as though they decided that is sound, not music.

When the applause faded, Dimitri Carras turned and greeted the audience by bowing. The orchestra followed suit, getting up from their seats to bow before quietly leaving the stage.

As though they had waited for the New York Philharmonic to leave, the audience quickly left. There was no curtain call.

Jun Hyuk did not move until everyone had left. When the couple who had come with Jun Hyuk also left and the theater was completely empty, Tara cautiously spoke up,

“Jun. You’re not going to go to the waiting room?”

“No. I think it’ll be better to just go. I need to join the showcase too. And... Maestro Carras will want to be alone.”

“Why? You think the concert was a failure?”

“He performed up to the 4th part. This in itself is a success. I thought it was okay, but I think critics are going to give bad reviews when they compare it with the album. He chose a method that was too safe.”

Tara did not miss the ray of disappointment that passed over Jun Hyuk’s face.

Chapter 240

New York Times Review

– Howling Lion. And Tamer.

Is it an overreaction if I thought of Marvin Gaye the moment I listened to the first track on Alvin Lee's new album – though it may need to be called Jun's album – 'My Wife'?

From white society's view of 60s black music, rhythm and blues, it was an evil to be defeated. However, ingenious Marvin Gaye put gospel in rhythm and blues and made it into something respectable instead of something depraved. Though his incredible vocals had also been a great weapon.

Marvin Gaye is the first great musician to make white adults gladly open their wallets to buy an album. This does not mean that his album went over the racial barrier.

Alvin Lee's album woke up the passion of white middle-aged people in their 40s and 50s, who had been fans of his when they were in their 20s in the 90s. Of course it cannot be denied that those wrapped in passion now in their 20s will be enthusiastic about this album as well.

If Alvin Lee's image until now had been that of a rocker who came back as a successful blues singer after falling into a drug addiction, Alvin Lee after this album will be a true musician creating another legend.

And there is a name that we cannot leave out here. It is Maestro JUN. Simply calling him a musician is not enough as he composed all of the songs on this album and even produced it.

This great musician is also the tamer.

He breathed life into the ashes of a forgotten pop metal band, that had been sleeping in a grave. He even brought out what could be considered one of Stanley Clarke's top 3 songs during their first meeting.

Something more surprising took place at the Monterey Jazz Festival. After a

performance with Lee Carlton and Stanley Clarke in front of a huge crowd, they played in a relaxed state as a dessert, resulting in a double album that quenched the thirst of jazz fans all over the world.

I can say this confidently about him. Musicians who meet him say that they basically put in a reservation for the top masterpiece of their music lives. Therefore, all musicians recommend meeting him quickly. The gate, Greatest, is waiting in front of them.

Oops! It seems like you do not need to hurry. Maestro JUN is only in his 20s, so there is still a lot of time.

New York Post Review

– An Important Lesson

The word ‘first’ has the power to focus the attention of the world. This is because behind the word ‘first’ always stimulates a primordial desire for conquest.

New York Philharmonic was the first to conquer last night. And Inferno, the never ending hellfire, at that.

Wait! They conquered the flames of hell?

But why is it so flat? It was unstimulating and has no remembrance of watching a heated drama involving a journey through adversity.

This is like hearing that someone had climbed Mt. Everest for the first time, so you turn on the TV and see him ride up in a helicopter to touch his feet down.

Is this the first conquest?

The album that Maestro JUN released is a successful experiment that shows music’s influence on the senses. The sad fact is that there are not even 1000 people on this earth who can enjoy this incredible result.

It could be that the New York Philharmonic and Maestro Carras are unlucky because JUN, the sniper who aimed at Beethoven’s heart, is alive.

He already set the standard for Inferno through a record. Because of this, he has drawn

a line to prevent people from performing the song on stage if they cannot go beyond that or provide a different type of sensation. (Whether JUN wants it or not)

Last night, the New York Philharmonic's show gave a clear message to other symphony orchestras. They should not go at it without thought. If they do not have the confidence to surpass the record, they should not even make an attempt.

Maestro Carras delivered this message and came down from the podium.



Jun Hyuk read the two contradictory reviews and put the tablet down on the table.

“Maestro Carras' shock must be great.”

“This is actually pretty gentle. The rest sting so much that you can't read them.”

“He is still the first person to perform the entire part, but no one discusses that fact”

“It's become a meaningless first. According to the criticism, I mean.”

President Stern also frowned and lit a cigarette.

“Don't you think he himself will have thought that it was reckless as well? But there would have been pressure from the board of directors too...”

“Maestro Carras is now.....?”

“He'll be resting at home. Don't worry too much. He's doing better than you think.”

President Stern let out a long puff of smoke and erased his serious expression, smiling as he spoke.

“Oh Jun, today is a happy Christmas Eve. You don't have much to do until the new year, so enjoy that time all you want. Shall we leave together?”

Though President Stern urged Jun Hyuk, Jun Hyuk did not seem to want to go outside.

“Isaac. I can get out of January promotions next year for the album, right?”

They already have several talk shows with nationwide networks CBS, ABC, and NBC prepared and dates decided. President Stern carefully looked over Jun Hyuk without awkwardness.

“Why? Is it because you don’t want to go out on a TV show?”

“Yes. I just want to rest at home until the tour starts.”

“Is it because of yesterday’s show?”

“No, I was satisfied. And I learned the true meaning of objectification thanks to it. It’s meaningless for critics when they compare my record and the show. Even this coffee cup changes from the different angles we take to look at it...”

President Stern did not make any expression, and did not ask the reason any further.

“Hm, alright. Rest until the tour. I’ll even ban Tara from entering. All good?”

“Yes. Tell Tara to go on vacation. She’ll have a lot of work once the tour starts.”

“Sure. I don’t know what you’re trying to do, but don’t forget to eat all of your meals.”

President Stern pat Jun Hyuk’s shoulder and left the apartment.

When Jun Hyuk was alone, he threw a stack of sheet music on the table and picked up a pen. His first thought after the New York Philharmonic’s show yesterday, had been about a revised version of Inferno.

Until now, he had not revised a completed version even if it was not to his liking. He thought that it would be better to create a new piece rather than to make revisions. However, Inferno is the first symphony he wrote. There is nothing to be ashamed about it looking back at it now, but it has already been revealed to the world and he thought he should evaluate it objectively and fix the shortcomings with fresh eyes.

He had been locked in thought regarding the orientation of his pen, when Kyung Min Ho came.

“Min Ho.”

“I’ll be back. I stopped by to see you before I left. Did I interrupt you?”

“It’s okay. Are you going to Korea today?”

“Yeah. President Stern got me a flight ticket. In first class. I’ll be back early February. I’m getting to ride a private plane and first class because of you. Thanks.”

“It’s not because of me. You got here on your own abilities. Musicians can’t be too modest. Korea’s going to be chaos.”

“Yeah. I think an article came out. The first Korean drummer to go mainstream globally. They’re saying that’s me. He he.”

Kyung Min Ho gave an embarrassed laugh and took 2 CDs out of his duffel bag.

“But Colin.”

“Yeah.”

“He gave me this after the showcase yesterday.”

The CDs that Kyung Min Ho is holding out are Colin’s records. One is his 1st album, a full length one, and the other seems to be the 2nd album he is currently working on.

“Did you listen to them?”

“Yeah.”

“What do you think?”

“It’s good. And it’s my style. That kid looks mild, but he seems to implicitly like flashy performances.”

“He didn’t say anything else?”

“He said some stuff, but how am I supposed to understand?”

Kyung Min Ho scratched his head and flushed.

“He’s saying he wants to be in the band together. In other words, you’ve been scouted.”

“What? With me?”

"Yes. It means he's telling you to listen to his music and join him if you want to. This music on this CD is what he's trying to put in his 2nd album. We're just a project band and we'll all go our separate ways once the tour is over. You'll have until then to make up your mind."

He looked surprised, but he did not seem completely pleased. He is carefully taking steps to a new path now. He knows that he cannot move too quickly. He had reached this opportunity with difficulty.

Chapter 241

Jun Hyuk spent the holidays in peace before the new year. He occasionally sniggered as he watched Alvin Lee on talk shows, but all he thought about was Inferno.

While he worked on revisions, he had a vague idea of why there were no traces of modifications from Mozart in the score. It is not difficult to write the song that fills his head in one go. And even if the song that was written like that is flawed, it was already a completed score. Everything needs to be reconfigured in order to fix one drawback.

This is his first attempt at revisions, and it is incomparably harder than writing a new song. He still had not finished the 1st part after an entire month, and his head was full of complicated thoughts.

When he had thrown his pen multiple times and progress was crawling forward, an unexpected person came looking for Jun.

“Director?”

“Oh, did you not get a call? The edited movie is being sent...”

Louis O’Connell scratched his head when he saw Jun Hyuk’s surprise.

“No, no one told me. I thought it would come by mail.”

“I couldn’t do that. We need to watch it together so I can tell you my thoughts as well.”

Louis O’Connell had a bottle of wine and a blu-ray title in his hands and was fittingly drunk for a director in the last stage of work.

The two of them sipped wine and started watching the movie together.

When the opening title came on the screen, Louis O’Connell held the remote control in his hand and started explaining the movie by taking turns pressing the pause and play buttons.

“This is where the music needs to start coming out. The overall tone is gray, right? It

starts out a bit dismally.”

The movie is called a horror thriller, but it is more like a detective story. A fierce battle of wits among the characters with money and personal history entangled to pave a double plot with murder, that brings a fight against the audience through intelligence.

“The music here will be lyrical, the 1st theme song...”

“Director.”

“Yes.”

Jun Hyuk wanted to stop the director’s incessant chattering.

“Don’t talk about the music, and just tell me about the emotion that you wanted to convey in each scene. What do you think about talking about revisions to make after I make all of the music?”

They got through the movie quickly once the director’s thoughts were not included. It ended without ending credits.

“We’re going to add in an 8 minute ending credit. Then the entire running time will be about 126 minutes.”

“So 2 main theme songs can come on for the ending credits?”

“Yes.”

Jun Hyuk took the remote control from the director’s hand.

“I’ll watch it again. This time, I’ll watch it straight through.”

Following Jun Hyuk’s warning not to talk, the two of them rewatched the movie, focusing without saying a word. When the movie was over, Jun Hyuk spoke up,

“It’s all done. I’ll give you the score tomorrow, so prepare the orchestra as 2 parts. Guitar, bass... Oh, I’ll record the rest, so all you have to do is prepare the orchestra.”

Jun Hyuk drank the rest of the wine in his glass on the table. He felt much better because he will be able to rest his head from his complicated thoughts on Inferno.

"I'd like to record in New York if possible... If not, I guess I'll have to go to LA?"

Louis O'Connell gulped and spoke clearly,

"Does that mean you just finished creating all of the music? Is that right?"

"Yes. Excluding the parts where you don't need music, it will come out to 98 minutes. You can listen to the theme songs for the ending credits and decide if you want to use them as soundtracks for the movie."

Louis O'Connell's face went back and forth between surprise and amusement. Keeping the quality of the music as a second thought, he has just met the world's best music director if evaluating him on speed alone.

"It would be better to record in LA. I will go back immediately and prepare the studio."

"Alright. I'll send you the score tomorrow. Oh right. Please have the orchestra become well-acquainted with the score. I'll go to LA in 3 days, prepare so that we can record right away."

Louis O'Connell came to New York, watched his movie twice, and went back to LA. He had planned to discuss the music with Jun Hyuk as the music director for at least 2 or 3 days, but they had finished it within half a day.

As soon as the film production staff and Louis O'Connell received the heap of scores that Jun Hyuk sent via e-mail, they ran to the LA Pops Orchestra. Louis O'Connell does not know how to read music and the curiosity over Jun Hyuk's music was driving him mad.

The art director of the LA Pops Orchestra stared at the score for a long time. His only question told Louis O'Connell what the standard of the music was really like.

"Which of these 16 songs is the main theme song?"

"Excuse me? What do you mean?"

The art director spread the scores out and shook his head.

"Look here. These 16 scores are surely theme music. It is written from No. 1 Theme to No. 16. The other 60 are imitative music."

The official name of normal theme songs is program music. This program music is released as a single album with soundtracks. It is configured with the songs with the emotions that the major characters and director think symbolize the subject.

Imitative music is not in the form of completed music, but is used as background music in every scene. Modern commercial movies are made up of 130 to 150 scenes, and music is needed in at least 100 scenes.

Louis O'Connell could not understand the art director's question.

"Isn't it definitely No. 1?"

"No. This is just the series number. I'm saying this because there's no way to distinguish which are superior and inferior."

"So you're saying that they're all good?"

"Yes. Are you really saying that he created this much of such great music in just 1 day?"

Director O'Connell is a living witness to something unbelievable.

"So there was a reason why everyone is so crazed over Maestro Jun. It's not like this is Mozart... You said he's coming the day after tomorrow?"

The art director of the LA Pops Orchestra felt slight excitement. He is eager to meet the living Mozart.

"Yes. He requested that the orchestra know the score completely by then."

"I understand. Of course we'll be completely prepared."

Louis O'Connell's expression however, was not just bright.

"But it does bother me a bit that the music is very good. Won't it stand out too much.....?"

"I think so as well. The music could overwhelm the film in some aspects... Oh, don't misunderstand me. I'm not deprecating the movie. It's just that the songs' perfection is incredible."

This kind of opinion means that Director O'Connell's worries are not severe.

"It's better than having plain music. Let's think about it positively."



It felt like California's warm weather was helping melt Jun Hyuk's uncomfortable heart a little. Tara had been on vacation when she got a call from Jun Hyuk and quickly flew to LA.

When she met Jun Hyuk in the LA airport, he looked different from the way he had a month ago. His always smiling face was gone and he was now expressionless, only giving her a formal welcome.

This is not very different from the way he looked right after the New York Philharmonic's concert.

Even inside the car from the airport to the studio, Jun Hyuk looked out the window and barely opened his mouth. The car went through LA in an awkward silence. Director O'Connell, film production executives, and the orchestra members were all waiting for Jun Hyuk in a large recording studio.

After making introductions, they were going to chat over tea, but Jun Hyuk shook his head.

"It is a fairly large workload. It might take a few days, so let's hurry up and start."

When the opportunity to cautiously check while comfortably drinking coffee disappeared, Louis O'Connell looked impatient.

"Uh, Maestro. The theme song is too good. Do you..."

Jun Hyuk frowned slightly and cut Director O'Connell off.

"Director. I know what you're worrying about. But didn't you agree as well? Film music needs to be good to listen to separately, without being prominent when combined with film and supporting it. Isn't that right?"

"That's – that's right."

"This music does not stand out at all when combined with the film. Whew – I don't understand. Why do we have to waste time talking about this? I keep what I promise. Listen to the music once it's added to the film and if you don't like it, tell me. I'll make it again whether it's 100 or 1000 times."

He was not yelling in rage, but anyone could tell that he is holding back his irritation. Tara was most surprised by this behavior. Until now, she has never seen Jun Hyuk reveal his uncomfortable thoughts externally.

She had felt that Jun Hyuk had changed a little when she saw him at the airport, but this moment is when she is reaching certainty.

Tara fell out of her thoughts at Jun Hyuk's following request.

"Then everyone except the orchestra, please leave the recording booth."

Everyone left the booth as though being chased out, and the performers looked at Jun Hyuk with expressions full of tension.

Chapter 242

“We’ll start with Theme No. 1. This song is dominated by woodwinds. The strings and brass winds need to play short and strong at the precise timing.”

Then they heard Director O’Connell’s voice over the recording booth speakers.

“Maestro. You need to tell us which part of the film No. 1 is, so that we can play the monitor.”

“What? You’re going to turn the movie on?”

“Yes. That way, you’ll be able to match it with the video...”

“We don’t need it. I’ll match the time exactly. It’ll just take attention away from the performers.”

Jun Hyuk looked at the surprised orchestra members. When they had recorded music for movies up until now, the conductor conducted while watching the videos. The music and film do not match up if there is even the smallest mistake, so Jun Hyuk’s intention to conduct without the video sounds absurd. Jun Hyuk felt their apprehension and spoke firmly,

“All you have to do is focus on my baton and the score. Then there will be no problem. Alright then, we are starting.”

When the baton moved, the performers realized that it is not the time to be worrying about the conductor. As soon as the first sound came out, Jun Hyuk tapped the music stand with his baton.

“Oboe! Your breathing was short. Again!”

This signaled the start of a rough day for them.

“Trombone. You know you came in late, right? Is it so hard to match the tempo? Again!”

It took 2 hours to record a 2 minute 45 second song. Jun Hyuk turned around and

spoke after the performers had sweat through their clothes.

"Director. Try putting the recording of No.1 Theme we just did on the video. The video starts at 18:24:16."

Jun Hyuk put the baton down and looked around at the performers.

"Let's take a short break. I ask that you focus more when performing the next song."

The recorders hustled to match the video time to the music, while Jun Hyuk left the studio to get fresh air. Tara quickly got a bottle of water and followed him out.

What Tara saw as strange in Jun Hyuk was his nerves. He is bristling like a hedgehog covered in spines, so the studio atmosphere is down. The ruler of the studio right now is the conductor, Jun Hyuk. The energy that his body is giving off is infecting everyone.

"Jun, what's up? What do you think about calming down a bit? Let's go a bit slower."

Jun Hyuk drank the water that Tara gave him, and rinsed his mouth.

"Pops Orchestra? The name is a waste. What orchestra....."

"Jun. They're not the New York Philharmonic. You can't expect that standard from them."

Tara cautiously coaxed him, but he said something that she was not expecting.

"You think the New York Philharmonic is something amazing? They were just one level higher than those people. They're just a little better off because they're older and have more experience. They physically performed more, so of course they'll be better but they're really all the same."

Jun Hyuk threw the water bottle in his hand.

"Ugh. Damn!"

Tara could not understand what Jun Hyuk was saying in Korean, but she could tell from his expression that he is swearing. And she thinks she knows where Jun Hyuk's current state came from.

Ultimately, it is because of the Inferno that Dimitri Carras performed. He must feel terrible because he was at the scene where his first symphony was ruined. But Tara's thoughts are half right and half wrong. Inferno is the cause, but it is not because of the New York Philharmonic or Dimitri Carras.

Jun Hyuk is angry because for the first time, his music is not going the way he wants it to. The revision work for Inferno is not coming out like a spider web as a completed melody in his mind. Most composers use methods of configuring notes, fixing, and carving.

This slow progress tested the limits of his patience, and the anger is being directed at the wrong place.

Jun Hyuk went back into the studio and Tara quickly got her phone out.

“Isaac. This is Tara. There’s a bit of a problem.”

Tara told President Stern about Jun Hyuk’s condition, and confessed what she is most concerned about.

“There isn’t much time before the tour with Alvin. I think performing will be impossible with the way Jun is now. I can’t imagine him performing on stage like this.”

She heard President Stern sigh over the phone.

“This is a big problem. The album is 2nd place on Billboard charts right now. It’s obvious that it’ll go up to 1st place next week... A total of 4 songs went up in Top 10 for the singles chart. The 12 songs that aren’t instrumentals are speeding to the top of charts. We can’t cancel the concert tour.”

They stayed on the phone and neither could speak for a while.



After recording 16 theme songs over 3 days, the LA Pops Orchestra gave up completely. The production company eventually had to ask for Jun Hyuk’s understanding.

“Maestro. The major theme songs are done, so we’ll work on the rest on our own for

the remainder. It seems you won't have to conduct the imitative music yourself."

Jun Hyuk felt a twinge when he saw the people being careful around him. He knows that he has been severe, but he had not been able to control the anger he felt whenever he heard the orchestra playing in the recording studio.

"Alright. Let's do that then. Oh right. Did you work on what we recorded until now and the music that I played?"

"Yes. It all matched up as though they had been measured with a ruler. We were really surprised."

Louis O'Connell spoke up when the studio engineers were admiring him.

"I apologize for being doubtful for a moment. I'm just a rookie director, but I can assure you that there is no film music that is more perfect than this. If my movie gets an Oscar, it won't because of the film work but because of the music."

Director O'Connell praised Jun Hyuk until he was red in the face. They said their goodbyes and Jun Hyuk left for the airport.

Tara spoke up first on the plane to New York.

"Jun. We need to start the tour in a month. Will you be okay?"

"Of course. Why are you asking that all of a sudden?"

"You're not asking because you don't know, are you? You need to start tours with excitement, anxiety, and happy expectations. But there's nothing like that in you right now."

Tara looked Jun Hyuk straight in the eye and spoke firmly.

"Forget the success of the tour – I'm saying this because if you start the tour in your current state, your condition might worsen."

When Jun Hyuk was about to say something, Tara put up her hand to stop him.

"Ask yourself. Are you in perfect condition mentally? If not, act like you are or cancel it. I don't have the confidence to watch you perform in difficult conditions."

Jun Hyuk sighed and turned to look out the window.



"Is Jun okay?"

"He says he wants to be alone until the tour. And he told me to tell you not to worry too much. He said he'll get through the tour schedule without problems."

"It's because of the New York Philharmonic's concert, isn't it?"

"Yes. I think he's just not saying much because of Maestro Carras. He doesn't want to blame him."

President Stern listened to Tara and remembered what he had been forgetting completely.

There are no artists who do what they do not like to do in order to make money. There is no need to say more with successful artists. Musicians who handle the murderous schedules of tours do so because they love the passion that comes from the audience.

A mistake is inevitable if they are so exhausted and tired that they even come to hate the hot air in the concert hall. The manager is the person who needs to get a grasp of this state and be able to read it. The manager also needs to be able to make the bold decision to cancel a tour schedule for his exhausted musician.

When President Stern realized his mistake, he felt a little sore. How could he make such a mistake? He should have realized when he met Jun Hyuk on Christmas Eve.....

When he thought that he needs to settle it before it is too late, the first person he called was Alvin Lee. When he explained the current situation, Alvin Lee surprisingly started out by laughing.

"Ha ha. Jun really wasn't a rocker. Isaac. Are classical guys normally that sincere? Do they go on stage and take on tour schedules even when they feel terrible?"

Alvin Lee talked about when he was young. He talked about not showing up for shows, getting into fights with the audience and making scenes.

"Isaac, take Jun out of this tour. I'll look into a guitarist to take his place. A private audition would be fine too. We can just adjust the schedule."

Alvin Lee did not worry about Jun Hyuk's absence at all. Or he was hiding his concern thoroughly.

"You think the fans are going to make a crazy fuss because a member changed all of a sudden, right? Not at all. Everyone claps and fawns over the new member if he does well. It looks like fans love and worships stars, but that's a mistake. What they love and worship in the end is the music. Of course if the band's symbol is changed, it's not a member change but a dissolution."

If even bands with long histories become intertwined with problems of changing music or money, there are often member changes.

"And isn't Jun a maestro? He became inspired and is putting all of his time into a new project. He isn't participating in the concerts in order to create an even better album. No one will be suspicious. People like us only have excuses like going to jail because of drugs or health issues, but Jun has a lot of excuses to give."

Alvin Lee saved President Stern from his worries.

"Everyone understands if a great artist like Jun acts however he wants to."

"I get you completely, but as you said, Jun is sincere. He has a strong sense of responsibility. I'm sure he won't fall out of a tour because of his own issue."

"Then create a way to justify his falling out. That's what a manager's for. Something that will make Jun want to back out of the tour. If he still wants to participate, there's no reason to worry."

When President Stern was about to end the call with Alvin Lee, he got an idea.

"Alvin. Get the best guitarist you can think of on board. As a guest."

President Stern thought of what could be enough justification and something Jun Hyuk would like most. He thought of what Amelia said before. Jun Hyuk is happier when he is creating music than when he is playing it.

When he thought of this as well, he started moving busily. He made calls to dozens of

places and even met with a few people in person.

And after 2 days, he made his last call to Jun Hyuk.

“Isaac, what’s up?”

“Jun. I didn’t interfere, did I?”

“No, it’s alright.”

President Stern felt a little better when Jun Hyuk’s voice was brighter than he had been expecting.

“Can you get lunch with me tomorrow? It’s something important.”

“Yes, that’s okay. But what’s so important?”

“I’ll tell you tomorrow when we meet. I’ll go pick you up from the apartment, so wait.”

Chapter 243

The next day, he went with President Stern to a shabby restaurant on a street in Queens. He asked who they would be meeting with while in the car, but Stern had not explained in detail, saying that he would know once they met.

Though it is lunch time, there was only one person at a table in the restaurant, waiting for Jun Hyuk.

“Ohh, Maestro. It’s an honor.”

Sergio Castellitto introduced himself as a Wall Street investor and looked to be an old man over 70.

He held Jun Hyuk’s hand for a while and did not look like he would let go, so President Stern sat him down.

“Sergio. Let’s eat first. We can talk while we eat.”

Sergio Castellitto sent a signal to the kitchen and the chef nodded before starting to cook.

“This restaurant’s T-bone steak is as good as that of a Michelin 3-star restaurant. Only people who know of this place come and go quietly. They aren’t usually open at lunch time, but I asked them to open it up specially so that we could have some quiet time to ourselves.”

Jun Hyuk took a bite of juicy meat. As Castellitto said, this is a place that cooks its meat very well.

“I own a very small company and make some money. Then, I saw your show with the New York Philharmonic and became a huge fan.”

Sergio Castellitto pushed away a plate that he had finished clean, and spoke quietly,

“Since the day I heard music that takes on Beethoven, there is just one thought in my head. That’s why I asked Isaac to let me meet you in person.”

"Thank you, Mr. Castellitto. Then will you tell me what that thought is? I can't ignore it when you've allowed me to taste steak this great."

The elderly Italian man's face brightened so much to Jun Hyuk's response that his smile made the wrinkles on his face straightened out.

"I was hoping you would become our Italy's Verdi or Puccini rather than Beethoven."

President Stern and Jun Hyuk understood the small Italian man's words at once.

Giuseppe Verdi, who composed over 30 operas in his lifetime, and Giacomo Puccini, the best Italian composer after Verdi who rose to international fame.

Puccini was born in Lucca in Tuscany, the land of wine and music, into a parish that handled the music for Lucca over 150 years. He was an organ runner in a cathedral from a young age, and a genius who took the pipe out of the organ to sell in exchange for cigarettes, performing with a different chord to hide the missing pipe.

He decided to become an opera composer after watching Verdi's opera, 'Aida' when he was young.

Verdi had a great influence on Italy's independence movement, and is the musician who the people love most.

The song in the 3rd act of his opera, 'Nabucco,' expresses the oppression that the Israelites suffered from Babylon. The Italians moaning under the yoke of Austria thought that this song of the Hebrew slaves was expressing their feelings.

Verdi's song spoke for the Italian people, and Verdi's name became the code of revolution. Viva! Verdi!

It is because the first letters of the name of the leader of the movement to unify the government, General Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia, became VERDI. was called the unofficial national anthem at the time of the independence movement.

"Are you asking me to write an opera?"

"Yes. But I'm not talking about a frivolous opera like Mozart's. Resurrect the traditional Italian opera."

A descendant of Rome to his bones, this old man does not hide the fact that he does not like Mozart's operas which were created in the German language.

"Traditional Italian... Then Italian for the language as well?"

"Of course."

Sergio Castellitto drank coffee as he watched Jun Hyuk's reaction. Jun Hyuk is already showing a great deal of interest.

"I already shared my thoughts with my friends in Italy, and they also sent their ardent support. As a result, we gathered \$70 million."

"What? \$70 million?"

\$70 million for an opera? Jun Hyuk nearly spilled his coffee.

"I'll leave everything up to you, Maestro. I believe that you have the capability to realize mine and my friends' dream. And of course we're thinking of having the premiere in Milan's opera sanctuary 'Teatro Alla Scala'."

The old Italian man's face is full of pride. Italians think of the opera as the mainstream of classical music. There is basis for their pride since classical music's representative format, the symphony, was originally the opera's overture.

"Instead, there is a condition."

Jun Hyuk's eyes shined as he listened to the old man.

"Love, betrayal, revenge, death. Please include these in the opera. I ask that you don't create it based on a light and fun scenario that is reflective of the times. You must bring out the tragic beauty of love, betrayal, revenge, and death in order for it to be a true Italian opera."

A giant opera worth \$70 million. He can make it any way he wants to and he can cast the best vocals in the world. Jun Hyuk has never even attempted to write an opera before. An opera is a play because a script is necessary. Writing is not an area that Jun Hyuk had in mind.

Sergio Castellitto watched Jun Hyuk as he was lost in thought, and spoke up cautiously,

“I heard that you’ll be touring soon.”

“Yes. It starts next month.”

“I could be overstepping my boundaries, but I wish you wouldn’t waste your abilities in such affairs. I do think that it is good to create great pop music, but there are a lot of musicians who can take your place in performing. I ask that you put all of your heart into creating music that will shine for 100, 200 years like Verdi’s opera.”

“Mr. Castellitto, I understand what you’re saying. It’s difficult to say anything at the moment... Will you give me some time to think it over?”

“Of course. We are ready to wait for as long as it takes. But an old man like me doesn’t know how long I have left to live. Please allow me to see the performance before I die.”

The old man held Jun Hyuk’s hand tightly again with sparkling eyes.



“What do you think? Isn’t it an interesting proposal?”

“It is. An opera... I didn’t even imagine it. Isaac, did you know?”

“No. We have known each other for a long time now... He just asked me to let him meet you because he’s a fan. That was it.”

In the car back to President Stern’s house, he kept watching Jun Hyuk.

“Will there be a good story if you were to write an opera? I kept thinking about that while we were eating. Love, betrayal, revenge. There aren’t stories like that these days. Even the slightly immature Italian tragic beauty? It would have been better if he brought a good scenario to you.”

President Stern shook his head negatively, and Jun Hyuk smiled.

“No. There was something I thought of as soon as he said traditional Italian.”

“What? What work is it?”

“Godfather.”

“Godfather? Oh my God!”

It was something that had not once crossed President Stern’s mind. Is it not one of the top masterpieces in the world, encompassing crime, family, and drama of the times? It is the first movie where all the 3 parts of the series were nominated for Academy Awards. It is a piece that would become news just by being called the modern classic Godfather.

“Isn’t it good material? Family, revenge, success, death. There’s even a bit of love. Italians like family.”

“The material is good, but isn’t the story too vast?”

The time in the 3-part series Godfather is chronologically over 90 years. It is ambiguous where to begin and end.

“I’ll have to mix Godfather part 1 and 2. If you think of Vito Corleone as the main character, the story can have young Vito Corleone, from Robert De Niro as the Godfather in his last years and Marlon Brando’s lifetime.”

Jun Hyuk showed a bit of fervor and discussed the opera’s configuration.

“We can reduce the role of the son, Michael Corleone, played by Al Pacino. If there isn’t a time limit, it can have the story of 2 generations.”

The character in all 3 parts of the series is the younger of the 2 sons, but Marlon Brando’s charismatic image is most deeply embedded in people’s memories. President Stern looked at Jun Hyuk and thought of something.

“You haven’t already started it, have you? In your head?”

“No. The real scenario needs to come out first for an opera.”

He waved his hand, but he was already thinking of how he could use the movie’s main theme song.

“Jun, tell me honestly. Do you really have thoughts of taking this on?”

“Yes. They’re willing to invest the whole of the production costs, so there’s no reason not to do it. It is a bit funny to think of writing an opera.”

“Why? What’s wrong with an opera?”

“Since the opera is disappearing now. There is a great alternative in musicals, so why do operas? It’s a bit laughable to use a huge sum of \$70 million to satisfy the hobbies of rich old Italians. Or... is it because they’re Italian people?”

He had a momentary look of disbelief, but he did not seem to mind.

“If you think of the time it’ll take to prepare the scenario, won’t it be right when the tour is over? The original novel and movie are already out, but it’ll take around 1 year since there are a lot of limits to operas.”

President Stern frowned.

‘Damn it. I invested \$15 million to give him a reason to drop out of the tour.....’

Chapter 244

He had not heard that Jun Hyuk wrote an opera yet, so he thought Jun Hyuk would be happy if he heard a proposal for an opera with a huge production budget. Jun Hyuk will need to concentrate completely on creating a masterpiece if he accepts the proposal, and Stern even calculated that he would drop out of the tour.

President Stern used the name Maestro Jun and contacted rich people with free lives, especially rich Italians, to propose the opera and people immediately filled in the other \$55 million funding.

The plan up to here had come along without issues, but he wants to continue with the tour?

President Stern spoke quickly and plainly,

“Jun. Can I say what I’m thinking?”

“Excuse me? Why are you like that all of a sudden? You can just say whatever you want to.”

Jun Hyuk found the way that President Stern’s tone changed, unfamiliar.

“The tour with Alvin. What do you think about dropping out?”

“Yes. Why all of a sudden?”

“3-month cross country tour. A world tour would be at least 6 months. I think it’d be better for you to spend that time creating.”

“Hm. I don’t know why you’re saying this all of a sudden... Then, can you tell me what makes it better than the tour?”

“Acting however you want. You’re not being in the mood to perform because of Inferno. Is that right?”

President Stern watched Jun Hyuk’s expression carefully. A bitter smile passed his face.

"That is right. But don't worry because it's not enough to give up the tour."

There's a promise I made to your father. I told him I wouldn't make you do anything that you don't want to do just because of money. The reason why you're doing the concert isn't 100% because of the money, but don't do it if there's any part of you that doesn't want to do it."

He is speaking in a decisive tone. Jun Hyuk is used to President Stern always speaking as though joking, and is hearing him speaking as though giving a command for the first time.

"It's better to use that time to write a song. And if you really are going to take on the opera, you'll have to work on the scenario too. You'd be the chief of this work, so let's make sure the scenario comes out perfectly from the beginning. You have to create it with the writer."

Jun Hyuk hesitated for a moment before speaking,

"Is it really okay for me to back out?"

"Of course. I'll make sure there are no problems with the tour, so don't worry about that."

He automatically sighed in relief. It worked. There are times with auspiciousness is necessary. President Stern said what he had been feeling.

"And forget Inferno now. I know you didn't like the New York Philharmonic's performance, but what are you going to do? It is that difficult of a song. No one will think about performing it completely for the time being. It isn't a bad idea to leave it as homework for a while."

When the New York Philharmonic was mentioned, Jun Hyuk realized that there had been a misunderstanding.

"What? What are you talking about? The New York Philharmonic's performance wasn't bad. I was able to discover a new side, too. Did you think I was like this because of the concert?"

"What? It isn't? Then?"

"You misunderstood. I'm creating a new version of Inferno right now... but it's a lot harder than I thought it would be. It was giving me quite a headache."

"A new Inferno? Well I'll be!"

President Stern's first thought was that the opera proposal was a great idea. Inferno again?

"Jun. Sometimes, the solution is to leave a problem unsolved. I don't know why you're trying to fix it, but I heard the Inferno album and looked over the score carefully. No matter what anyone says, Inferno is a masterpiece."

Jun Hyuk did not say anything and only nodded. It is hard for him to explain to someone else what he is working on now. Isaac Stern could be right as well. It could be an assignment that he needs to solve alone for the rest of his life.



When Alvin Lee's cross country tour was about to start, the press shouted for joy again. It was because of Jun Hyuk not participating as well as the reason for that.

"Currently, we have obtained the copyrights for the original novel and movies. We are also searching for production staff including a writer to take on the opera scenario and an art director to handle the set. We will create a crew that is the best fit for Maestro Jun. Please look for exciting things to come."

Stern Corporation's public announcement was included in all press outlets.

A young genius who always creates newsworthy music is making a traditional Italian opera worthy of exhibition in a museum. Furthermore, that opera is of a masterpiece of a movie that has continued to gain new followers over the last 40 years.

Though all they did was to reveal their plans, they were pelted with phone calls from all respectable management agencies and organizers. They asked about audition schedules to get their agencies' vocals included, and discussed their intentions to promote additional performances following the premiere in Milan's Teatro Alla Scala.

It seemed that no one thought the opera would be a failure. Half of this was because of the power that the movie 'Godfather' has, and half is that they trust Maestro Jun's

abilities.



Tara flew to California with Jun Hyuk and was in awe by the endless vineyards spread out below them. Proprietor of luxury wine brand Inglenook produced in Napa Valley, the main source of America's wine, is Grandfather's director Francis Ford Coppola.

"Tara. Is Director Coppola the owner of this place?"

"Yeah. I heard he now feels more pride in being the owner of Inglenook Winery than he does as a movie director. I'm pretty sure he invested most of the money he made through film in this."

When they arrived at the winery building, Director Coppola was waiting for Jun Hyuk.

"There shouldn't be anything in particular that I can be of help with... You've come to me since Mario Puzo, the original author, has passed away."

"No, that's not it. The opera's original will be the movie. That's why we purchased the rights for the films as well."

"And how did you come to such a nonsensical thought? Ha ha."

Director Coppola laughed as he offered Jun Hyuk wine. He did not taste anything special, but he drank each sip as though he were melting it on his tongue because the 1941 Inglenook wine is currently worth \$30,000.

"Godfather was the only original that met the demands of the investors. I don't know much because I haven't read much."

"Alright. Then let's see what you were so curious about that you flew all the way here. I honestly looking forward to it too."

"Is the Italian mafia really elegant upper class gentlemen as they're shown in the movies? The things they do and their natures are that of gangsters, but they're drawn out as complete businessmen."

Director Coppola did not put his wine glass down, and only smiled silently. It seems

he is looking back into a distant past.

“Of course not. Do you want to know something funny? The real boss of the mafia at the time of the movie’s release and the boss of New York’s 5 families, George Bonanno, himself came to see it. I heard that he changed the way he dressed and spoke to be like that of Marlon Brando or Don’s Vito Corleone after that. I didn’t draw the mafia, but they copied the movie. He he.”

A movie really is just a movie. It was what he expected, but the illusion was shattered. The young and old artists discussed movies and music for a long time.

“The scene where Vito Corleone dies of a heart attack while playing in a tomato field with his grandson. What kind of scene did you want then? And were you able to capture it the way you wanted to on camera?”

“Since you said you watched it too, why don’t you tell me first?”

“It’s cool until the very end. That’s what I thought.”

Jun Hyuk watched Director Coppola as he responded, but the old great was not fooled.

“Nothing flat like that, but the truth. A musician, and someone called a genius at that, can’t express his thoughts about that scene as something cool.”

Jun Hyuk’s already wine-flushed cheeks grew even more red. Why are these old people so perceptive? This director and Isaac Stern.

Jun Hyuk scratched his head and spoke slowly,

“I felt like it was laughing at something. Wouldn’t it have been more like the godfather of a mafia if he died with bullets all over his body from the opposing family? An old man whose everything is playing with his grandson after retirement. It ended with a humbel death as an average old man, with the only difference being his wealth.”

Director Coppola emptied his wine glass and recalled the passion of filming at the time.

“You’re right when you say average. But it wasn’t humble or laughing at anything.”

“Then...?”

"I just wanted to draw the death of an average old man. Vito Corleone's life was really tumultuous. I didn't want to condemn or praise his life. He was just the head of a household supporting his family, and he's just an average old man after retiring. You can't say an old man is average if he's shot to death."

Jun Hyuk was thinking of ending the opera with Vito Corleone's death. The expression of his death will decide the opera's success. He needs to avoid having it called a second decoction of the movie no matter what.

Chapter 245

Colin was on the cross-country tour of his dreams and gaining a reputation as a bassist with overflowing personality. Kyung Min Ho felt like this tour was a dream even while he was playing the drums.

After about a month passed however, they realized that stamina is most important when trying to handle a nomadic lifestyle of constant movement. They finally felt the true nature of touring when there were neverending days spent sleeping on buses and planes.

The concert planning agency fell into a panic when they found out that Jun Hyuk was dropping out, but sighed in relief when a prominent star guitarist was brought on for each changing performance.

It was also a great factor in the show's success. Once the fans started enjoying the curiosity of who the next guitarist would be, there was no longer any complaint regarding Jun Hyuk's absence.

While they were handling a busy schedule, Jun Hyuk was spending his days in leisure, meeting each of the major characters of Godfather.

He met with people like Al Pacino who is of Italian immigrant lineage like Director Coppola, Robert De Niro who acted the role of young Vito Corleone, James Caan of the older son role, and Robert Duval of the attorney role in turn to get feedback on casting.

He had wanted to be able to meet Marlon Brando of the Vito Corleone role and original author Mario Puzo, but they had already passed away.

The chief director of an opera needs to materialize the image in his head. Jun Hyuk is systematically building out the visual image and the emotional flow of the play.

"Jun. These are the profiles for the scriptwriter candidates. Look over them and pick. It's fine to have one or two, since they can do a collaboration."

The document that President Stern gave him had the various writer's records and major works. There were various experts in the field, from movie scenario writers,

poets, novel writers, to musical script writers.

The common factor was that they are all Italian. There are those who are also active in British Columbia, and those who never left Italy. He needed to have an English translation for the people who were only active within Italy.

"And we got an interesting proposal. Director Martin Scorsese proposed making a documentary."

Jun Hyuk was so surprised he almost threw the papers he was looking at.

Martin Scorsese, symbol of Hollywood gangsters and noir film, is the son of Italian immigrants.

As shown in his filmography, he likes heavy masculine drama and has a strong passion for music in particular.

movie series is a 7-part documentary created under Martin Scorsese's chief directing. The beginning of a tremendous project going across the American continent to Africa and Europe stemmed from Martin Scorsese's affection for the blues, and his desire to get its history and story out to the world.

The journey depicted in series became a beautiful and emotional tribute to the great directors in music. His production skills are also so great that he was able to film a Rolling Stones live show documentary 'Shine A Light'.

There is no reason for such a man to hear about a gangster classic with music – much less an Italian opera – and stay still.

"A documentary?"

"Yeah. He said he wants to capture everything from the scenario production to the La Scala show."

"What's there to capture? All there will be is me staring out blankly and then writing on sheet music."

"Jun, a great producer is able to capture that blank staring in an emotional manner. And it could be a documentary about creating the opera or about you. Is that okay?"

If it had been a different director, Jun Hyuk would have rejected it without a second's hesitation. But it is Martin Scorsese, one of his favorite directors.

President Stern could see that Jun Hyuk is conflicted, and gave advice that would help him make up his mind.

"What do you think if we don't film anything personal... like shooting at home or taking away from your personal time? It'll be hard to come across a project like creating a traditional opera again, so I'd like to have a record like this as well."

"Then one more thing. Turning the camera off no matter what when I want. We can go through with it if that condition is included."

President Stern took his phone and gave the order to write up a contract regarding the documentary production first.



Jun Hyuk, Tara, and President Stern looked through documents for several hours in order to choose scenario writers.

"Giuseppe Ung? Ungaretti? Who is this person?"

"Oh, Ungaretti? Why? You like him?"

"Yes. First, this poem translated into English is good, but I don't know what the original Italian will be like..."

Jun Hyuk shook a poem in his hand and Tara took Ungaretti's poem from him. She read slowly through the original text on the back.

'Does Tara know Italian? I'm confused.'

Jun Hyuk was trying not to be surprised. It is really not something to be surprised by because he heard that she is good at most European languages.

Jun Hyuk listened to Tara reciting the poem and focused on the sound of the language. The distinctive rolling that does not seem to end in Italian was nice to listen to.

Giuseppe Ungaretti broke traditional writing styles and drew out the devastation of the modern world using a wild rhythm. After releasing that first poem, he dedicated himself to his works and reaped success.

Jun Hyuk did not know anything about him, but there is music inside his poem. The music moved with variety and density inside the poem, but was also a tool that brought out the beauty of sound like a 1-person opera.

“It’s good. Let’s go with this person.”

“Then you’ll need another professional screenwriter. Ungaretti will only be able to write dialogue. He can’t configure an entire scenario.”

“Then Isaac, find an appropriate person. I’ll just prepare the dialogue with this poet.”

President Stern looked over Ungaretti’s profile and frowned.

“You’ll have to go to Italy if you want to work with this poet. It says that he barely leaves his house. Traveling abroad in particular is impossible. Apparently, he can’t ride planes. Who is this guy?”

Jun Hyuk stopped Isaac Stern from making a call.

“It’s okay. Going to Italy is better anyway. No, I need to go. I need to see the operas they enjoy watching for myself. That old Italian man, Sergio, said that it needs to follow Verdi. I’ll take this chance to see the Italian people.”

President Stern started laughing when Jun Hyuk said that he would go to Italy.

“If you’re going to go, go fully prepared. There will be chaos from the airport.”

“What?”

“Will there be an Italian who does not like a young genius who wants to resurrect the traditional opera? You’re a daring young man who has thrown a challenge at not just Beethoven, but Verdi and Puccini now. Of course this is different from when you took on Beethoven.”

“Oh, I guess they could see it like that. Have I made another mistake?”

“Oh, no. You’ll be cheered on passionately this time. You’re a hero in Italy right now. Their expectations for you are next level. Ha ha.”



When Jun Hyuk on President Stern’s private plane, a man he was seeing for the first time greeted him.

“It’s an honor, Maestro. I’m looking forward to working with you.”

“Oh, sure. Are you filming the documentary?”

“Yes.”

“And Director Scorsese?”

“He’s in the middle of filming his movie. I’ll be taking over for now. Maestro, you can treat me like I don’t exist, as though I’m a shadow. You’ll have to get used to the camera rolling at all times. That’s how a natural side of you will come out.”

“I see. I’ll try.”

‘Damn. I guess I won’t get to see Director Scorsese. Did I say I’d do this for nothing?’

Jun Hyuk needed to make an effort to hide his disappointment in front of the cameraman.

Countless reporters and fans were already waiting for Jun Hyuk at the entrance in Peretola airport in Firenze, Italy.

Fans who were anticipating the opera held posters that read ‘VIVA VERDI! VIVA JUN!’ and cheered when they saw Jun Hyuk.

“Thank you for welcoming us. We will be going somewhere quiet to work on the scenario. I hope you will understand that I cannot reveal the destination. And we will hold interviews when leaving the country. Ciao!”

Tara gave her greeting and they quickly left the airport. Jun Hyuk’s group headed west for a city on the coast of Firenze.

Chapter 246

Giuseppe Ungaretti was living in a small house on the lakeside in Lucca, Puccini's hometown.

"This is great. It feels like inspiration for poems will come out here automatically."

Jun Hyuk was in awe of the scenery.

A huge lake and reed field, a river leading to the ocean, and an island. Everything beautiful in nature is gathered in one place.

"Is he someone who secluded himself here and doesn't come out?"

"Pretty much. He only meets with the publishing staff."

He had imagined a hermit, but the poet waiting for him at the house was a smartly clad handsome man. Tara even blushed as she shook his hand.

His behavior was typically intrinsic and shy. He barely spoke and even his movements were quiet.

Even while Jun Hyuk discussed the form of the opera he is thinking of, he did not speak and only listened. Jun Hyuk thought that it was a relief that he is not a chatty Italian.

All they did for the day was watch the movie Godfather. Jun Hyuk picked out the scenes he would use for the opera, and Ungaretti expressed the dialogue again poetically.

Jun Hyuk could feel the difference between poems and music. Though he is a genius poet, he is unable to compress the movie dialogue like music on the spot.

After about 10 days, the introverted poet created dialogue for 5 scenes.

Tara did not spare on her admiration as she read Ungaretti's dialogue.

"Jun, this person really is a genius. How could he change a movie script like this? It's really great."

Jun Hyuk could not feel the difference that the details give because of a language barrier, but he was satisfied with the rhythm delivered through the sound.

"Tara. For dinner tonight, let's go to a famous restaurant around here that has the most people."

"Why? It'll get noisy if someone recognizes you. Didn't you not like places with a lot of people?"

"A place with more people is better for tonight."

They went into a cafe full of a positive aura characteristic of Italy. They did not recognize Jun Hyuk, who entered quietly.

Jun Hyuk ate a few slices of pizza and walked over to an upright piano sitting in the cafe. No one paid attention to Jun Hyuk because they were focused on their food and conversations.

Quiet spread through the cafe when the piano melody changed to the aria 'On love's rose-colored wings' from Verdi's opera 'Il trovatore'.

At first, the calm piano melody could not be heard because of the noise in the cafe. Once the people closest to the piano started to quiet down to focus on the piano melody, the cafe soon became filled with the sound of Jun Hyuk playing the piano.

There was the occasional murmur of people wondering who the pianist is, as they could only see his back.

When the song was over after about 4 minutes, there was clapping but the piano melody did not stop and continued to flow on. He continued with the most popular aria from Verdi and Puccini, and the chefs working in the kitchen came out to listen.

After playing 4 arias consecutively, Jun Hyuk got up from the piano and turned to bow to the cafe customers. There was an urgent cry from somewhere.

Maestro Jun!

Mamma Mia!

Jun Hyuk responded to the yelling customers with a bright smile and waved Tara over.

Tara was also smiling when she approached Jun Hyuk.

"Si si. You're right. This is Jun."

The cafe became full of the sound of cheering and clapping. The documentary cameraman stood on a chair to film the cafe.

He had not been expecting such a surprise show. He had just followed along to capture an insert cut of Jun Hyuk eating, but he had hit jackpot.

"I gave you a present in order to ask for a small favor. Did I interfere with your meals?"

Everyone shook their heads and shouted 'No'. Tara bowed again, looked around the cafe, and gestured to an elderly gentleman. She whispered into his ear and the man's eyes grew wide as he laughed.

The white-haired elderly gentleman cleared his throat and slowly read through the script that Tara gave him. He was unable to hide his trembling hand and voice while on the first page, but he started following a poetic rhythm at some point as though he was an actor, adding emotion and becoming enwrapped in the script.

Each passage is a lyric. A lyric is a verse and that in itself must be beautiful.

Jun Hyuk examined the expressions of the people in the cafe. How will Italian people react? They need to experience the beauty of the verses and their expressions need to change accordingly in order for Ungaretti's work to be a success.

When the old man was done reciting, he could tell that there was no exaggeration regarding Ungaretti's talent and fame. The people's clapping, whistling, and cheering shook him of his last worries.

"I'm sure you already realized, but this beautiful verse is a lyric from the opera Godfather. You have been the first to hear a part of it."

This kind of accidental luck brings people happiness. They cheered again because they had become protagonists of an unexpected situation.

"Then please enjoy Maestro Jun's last gift. We trust that you all will keep this a small secret between us. Jun will need to leave if the press finds out and it becomes noisy."

After Tara spoke, Jun Hyuk started playing the piano. As this is Puccini's hometown, he played 'O Mio Babbino Caro' for the end.

No one having lunch at the small cafe in Italy thought that they would become the chorus for Puccini's song.

"What do you think? Isn't that a great reaction?"

"You're right. Italian people don't hide their feelings. We wouldn't have been able to see such expressions if they hadn't liked it."

Jun Hyuk and Tara could fully trust Ungaretti's abilities. The cameraman could not hide his light excitement either.

"Maestro. I got vivid close-ups of the people's reactions. You can take a look at it when we're back at the hotel."

Jun Hyuk did not know that the filming he had found so bothersome would come in so handy. The cameraman was thinking that he was lucky not to have missed filming Jun Hyuk playing the piano.



Jun Hyuk carefully chose the scenes to put in the opera over 2 months, and left Lucca. Ungaretti promised that he would complete his work on the script in the remaining 5 months, and he is someone who takes responsibility for what he says.

Jun Hyuk visited small cities in Italy with Tara, and watched all of the operas showing in each city. They were shows without huge vocal stars or famous orchestras, but he tried hard to find the true essence of Italian operas in them.

Operas that do not rely on the vocals' ability to sing or the orchestras' ability to perform, but touch on emotions. He did not even turn down a show at a small bar to look for the common factor in those emotions.

Once Jun Hyuk got used to the camera lens and stopped paying mind to the filming as the cameraman told him to do, he went back to New York. And summer was already starting in New York.

The peak summer season in which Hollywood blockbusters come out one after the other is a time for movie producers to rest. They cannot rest comfortably because they are conscious of box office performance, but they do not have to work.

When President Stern and Jun Hyuk arrived in Hollywood to meet with several directors before choosing the one to join the project, many directors who were spending their time in a leisurely manner showed interest.

They needed to be especially careful when selecting the art director and sound director.

There was no recording technology in the time of Verdi and Wagner, so they could not use sound effects, but it is different now. They are already utilized in musicals and they bring up the level of completion in plays.

Jun Hyuk intended not to spare on using modern technology for special effects, and it was the same for sound. They cannot leave out the sound of bullets in an opera in which the foundation is the mafia world.

Hollywood's powermen including Martin Scorsese introduced him to people with incredible ability, and Jun Hyuk started meeting with them.

He checked their filmographies and after having thorough discussions about their imaginations and thoughts, he ended up only meeting with 2 people in a day.

"Isaac. I finally realize how tiring it is to meet with people."

"That's the work of a chief director. You have to meet people and choose a good person. Are you already missing the time when you only focused on composition?"

"It's not that, but there's no change in the fact that it's tiring and exhausting work."

"Then shall I tell you something that'll give you strength?"

President Stern was looking at his laptop, and went to sit next to Jun Hyuk who was spread out on the sofa in the hotel room.

"You want to take a look at this?"

There were numbers all over the screen that President Stern showed him.

"Jun, it's 'A, I, U, E, O' that was released last summer"

"Yes."

"I'm surprised too since this is the first time something like this has happened, but.....

Chapter 247

President Stern took his glasses off and explained the numbers.

“There are already over 700 places that say they want to arrange and use the songs. They’re places like record labels, agencies, and management agencies.”

“700?”

Jun Hyuk bolted up and stared at the laptop.

“Players who want to hold concerts with instruments. Composers who want to arrange it with lyrics as pop music. Vocals who want to sing it the way it is as an aria. This is a first for me too.”

Jun Hyuk moved the mouse cursor around to figure out the total of the numbers, but the list of numbers was never ending.

“There are already several amateurs who arranged or added lyrics without our permission. There’s a lot on YouTube too.”

Stern Corporation’s legal team already proposed sharing ad revenue from the YouTube users who uploaded the song without permission. They included discussions on copyright infringement issues as well.

“Of these, there are those who released formal albums and there are those who are preparing. We contracted the use of this song at \$10,000 to \$50,000. It’s case by case.”

“And there are still this many people who say they want to use it?”

Even Jun Hyuk thought that \$50,000 is too expensive.

“Because it’s hard for them to find such great material. ‘A, I, U, E, O’ isn’t just a melody. That’s why there’s less burden for how the arrangement comes out. It’s actually just a remake if the arrangement is done and there’s a song complete with an accompaniment and lyrics. There’s no room for the arranger’s abilities to intervene.”

A remake needs to be better than the original to be the main song. If it falls even a little short, criticism is a given and the album does not sell.

“But the important thing is that this isn’t the end. Royalties and composition fees come in every time albums and singles that have lyrics or are arranged sell. Honestly, I can’t even guess how much that will be or how high it’ll go. Our staff had to stop after trying to estimate the sales.”

There is already a return of \$30 million in revenue. This amount is just the start though. President Stern’s expression was so subtle that it was indiscernible what it meant, whether he was happy about it, surprised by the tremendous amount, or worried that he cannot handle it.

“So that means it’s much better than releasing a completed song as a record?”

“Incomparably. The biggest advantage is that people of different countries put in the lyrics and emotions that fit each respectively so it’s suitable to the people of that country and there is a variety of completed songs. There’s no end to this.”

All of this started with the beauty of the original song’s melody.

“We already got a call from the Guinness Book of World Records. They want us to add it up and let them know. It’ll go up as the song with the most variations.”

“Really? That’s really unexpected.”

To Jun Hyuk, it is just a song that he made to bring out Laura’s voice. He never thought of results like this.

“I’m cautiously expecting that this will bring in way more than any of the other songs you’ve released until now.”

Fees and royalties, shows, TV broadcasting, insertion in dramas and movies. These are all areas to expand into as different versions.

“This is basically like a goose laying a golden egg.”

Jun Hyuk thought hard for a while and snapped his finger.

“Isaac. Should we just make a farm?”

“What? A farm?”

Isaac Stern saw Jun Hyuk’s face full of jest and laughter, and could guess what he meant by a farm.

“Yes. As long as there’s a beautiful melody, people use it to make pop music and instrumentals. And there will be all genres depending on how the arrangement for pop music is done. Since the lyrics are written according to that nation’s emotions, the sales rates will be beyond the basic.”

It is as he expected.

“So you’ll only create and release melodies? It is a good idea but wouldn’t it be too hard for you? Why don’t we slowly revisit that issue after completing the opera? You’re not bored with composing the opera, are you?”

He felt his stomach drop because he thought that Jun Hyuk might say that he will focus everything on composition because there is nothing better for making money, it is what he finds the most fun, and it is easiest for him.

Jun Hyuk waved his hands and got up from the sofa. He slowly paced the room and spoke,

“Working on the opera is fun too. As you said, there’s no time to create a different melody. I’m just saying that there’s no reason to wait until then. Didn’t I tell you before? All of the songs I haven’t released yet are in storage. Let’s just release all of those at the same time.”

Storage? Is he talking about the songs he has not released yet? President Stern recalled the tremendous amount of scores that Yoon Kwang Hun showed him when they met for the first time at the cafe.

“Hang on. The melodies that are between 3 and 5 minutes... Oh right, the ones that are preferred most are the 2 songs, A and O, right?”

“Yeah, since the range for those 2 songs isn’t high...”

“The ones I made are easier on the ears. Like Mozart.”

The word ‘Mozart’ echoed in President Stern’s ears.

"How... how many songs are there? The ones that are easier and comfortable to listen to."

"A little over 100? Probably?"

President Stern's jaw dropped. Songs with major copyrights like that of the Beatles or Abba receive \$30,000 in fees each time they are used in movies or on TV. However, it is rare for these to have been remade into songs that fit each country.

Over 700 versions will be created from just 5 songs. How many songs will result from over 100? Jun Hyuk surprised President Stern again.

"If we're making melodies that are just moderately good to listen to, I could make dozens on the spot. If I put them on a score, it means that they are pretty complete."

President Stern's hands trembled as he watched Jun Hyuk talk about it as though it is no big deal. He does not think that Jun Hyuk really understands the weight of revealing those scores.

A little over 100 songs could become thousands and tens of thousands of songs, hit the world hard, and keep coming on 50 years after he dies like those of the Beatles and Abba.

If they are songs that are of high standard as Jun Hyuk said, the pop music industry could become filled with the music of one composer the moment they release all of the scores.

He remembered what he had said as a joke to Jun Hyuk before. That he wants to see him as the person with the most Grammy Awards. President Stern realized that this dream was too simple for Jun Hyuk.

"Anyway, I'll make a call to Korea and ask for copies of the scores."

"Al – alright. If there's anything you don't want to reveal, you don't have to..."

"What is it? Why are you being like that all of a sudden? You asked me a bunch of times when I would release the scores I had stacking up. He he."

Jun Hyuk thought it was unexpected that Isaac Stern seemed strangely nervous, but he acted without hesitation.

“Sir, this is Jun Hyuk.”

– Yeah. How’s the work on the opera going?

“It’s going well thanks to you.”

– Of course, of course. Of course it’s thanks to me. You saw the Godfather series with me multiple times. If it weren’t for me, you wouldn’t have come up with the idea to make that movie into an opera.

“Oh sure. Of course.”

They went back and forth bragging in such seriousness that it did not feel like they were joking. Jun Hyuk chuckled.

“Sir. You have a separate collection of my scores with just melodies, right?”

– Yeah. Why?

“Can you send me a copy of those?”

– Copies? You can rewrite them if you need to. Don’t you remember all of them?

“I do, but we’re thinking of releasing all of them. How am I supposed to write all of them again?”

Yoon Kwang Hun’s voice started shaking over the phone.

– You’re going to release all of them? Finally?

“Yes. Interesting things are happening with these.”

Jun Hyuk told him about how his original song is changing and developing.

– Goodness. There was that much of a reaction?

“That’s what I’m told. I was thinking of just making it into a piano or string instrumental, but I don’t think it’s a bad idea to use them as sources of various genres either.”

- I see. It's really a surprising method. So it'll be impossible to get all of your songs in an album. There will be hundreds – no – thousands. Ha ha.

His voice could not hide his excitement that Jun Hyuk's music would spread out all over the world.

- Let me know where I need to send the copies. I'll send them by tomorrow.

President Stern was still shaking until the end of Jun Hyuk's phone conversation.

Chapter 248

The art director who Jun Hyuk looked forward to meeting with the most, was Paul Kieve.

He handled the special effects for the 'Harry Potter' movie series and showed an overwhelming music in the 'essence of the science of the stage' in the musical 'Ghost'.

The set kept moving, LED lights poured out colorful images, and a few holograms added on even implemented ghosts as though in a movie.

He used various techniques in the mechanisms of modern musicals that caught Jun Hyuk's eye.

A fixed stage set is a factor that interferes with immersion for people who are already used to the movie Godfather. An opera with a moving and changing stage, and a background screen with video that makes a car chase scene possible. Jun Hyuk is dreaming of a dynamic stage like a movie.

To him, Paul Kieve's stage effects and techniques are perfect.

Once he chose the stage art and sound directors, and brought on a writer who would make Ungaretti's lyrics into a complete scenario, all of the people left were those who would take on the most important roles.

These are the lead vocalists and the director who would lead the acting. The triplex dancing, singing, and acting need to be in harmony for it to be an opera and a musical. Jun Hyuk's opera however, does not have dancing, but the major axes are acting and singing.

President Stern was busy starting vocalist auditions and selecting a director to lead the acting.

Already famous star singers simply expressed their interest in participating instead of auditioning. What they need is to coordinate those stars and casting.

Everyone wanted the role of the hero, Vito Corleone, but Jun Hyuk shook his head.

“Isn’t he too old? Will he be able to take it on when he’s over 70?”

The card that Jun Hyuk held out for the role that needs to take on the whole 2nd act and middle of the 3rd act, or half of the entire opera, would seem irrational to anyone. It is natural that President Stern is worried.

If the opera is a success, it will not end after a few performances. The actors will need to handle doing at least 50. Jun Hyuk’s card, Dario Argento, is not young enough to take on such a rigorous schedule.

Dario Argento, a vocalist from Spain, was born in 1941. There is no need for him to be the same age as the role, but he cannot make the same sound that he made during his heydays.

He made his official debut as a baritone in 1961 and after, he raised his range to tenor and became active.

He is the opera singer who has taken on the most roles in human history and he has almost no language barrier, so though his native language is Spanish, he was also able to take on roles in languages including Italian, French, German, English, and Russian.

Though he is more than 70 years old, he is not thinking of retiring and is still active. The old man is still expanding his repertoire by starring as baritone and in new roles in forgotten works or premieres.

He cannot beat the wall of time though, and rejects main roles on his own and mostly takes on supporting roles.

“Even if we offer it, he’s likely to turn it down. It’s a big burden.”

“I chose him because of his age. I don’t want someone who sings too perfectly with a clean voice. He really needs to seem ill especially in the 3rd part where the old man barely recovers after being shot. We need to show the retired boss’ deterioration, and a young tenor won’t be able to express that.”

It is a given that a great singer wants to fully show his talent on stage. But what Jun Hyuk wants is someone who fits the role perfectly.

“His acting is like that of a movie actor, so there’s no need to change that and since there is ‘spinto’, there’s no better person.”

Spinto is Italian for ‘push’. It refers to the strength and weight of a tenor that can intensely push a high pitch while being sustainable.

“Fine. I’ll arrange a meeting. What are you going to do? Are you going to meet him with me?”

Whatever happens, Jun Hyuk is the person in charge of this opera. President Stern has no choice but to follow his lead.

“I’ll have to, won’t I? We need to show that we’re asking this of him earnestly.”

There is a character more important to Jun Hyuk than the protagonist.

The female vocalist barely appears in the original. But the soprano who expresses the tragedy in the introduction is a very important role.

Vito Corleone’s mother. Vito’s father was killed for disobeying the area’s mafia boss Don Francesco Ciccio, and Vito’s older brother was shot to death at his father’s funeral for swearing revenge.

Vito’s mother went looking for Don Ciccio and begged for him to save the second son, Vito, but he said that he could not let him live because he will, without a doubt, try to get revenge if he grows more.

So Vito’s mother takes out a knife, holds Don Ciccio hostage to let Vito escape, and she takes a bullet to her death.

The soprano needs to leave after just 2 songs that express this powerful motherhood and a tragedy that leads to the death of the entire family. She needs to sing the devastating situation of having to beg the enemy, who killed her husband and oldest son, to save her last remaining son.

On top of that, her son will die if she slashes the mafia boss’ neck with the knife, but she cannot push the knife in if she wants to save her son. In this incredible situation, she holds him hostage until her son gets away and she needs to sing while crying out for her son to be safe.

It took Ungaretti over 2 weeks to write the script for these 2 songs alone. Jun Hyuk was strangely fussy and obsessed over it, repeatedly demanding edits. When he was pleased with the lyrics, he told Ungaretti with confidence,

“These 2 songs will become the representative songs of the opera.”

They are called the representative songs, but it is a supporting role that needs to sing just 2 songs before exiting. There was no one who wanted to audition for this role.

Andalucia is the 2nd largest district in Spain, located in the south of the country on the Mediterranean Sea. The climate is hot even for warm southern Europe, so it is a top vacation spot for Europeans.

“What? By myself?”

“Yeah. He said that he wants to talk with you alone. I’ll be at the hotel, so call when you’re done.”

President Stern left Jun Hyuk in front of a big mansion, and briskly went back to the hotel.

With white hair, a face without wrinkles, tall height, and brawny build, Dario Argento does not look like he is over 70 years old. He welcomed Jun Hyuk who came in looking around at the living room that is as large as a gym.

“Welcome, Maestro.”

“It’s an honor, Mr. Argento.”

When Argento took Jun Hyuk’s hand, he could feel vigor.

“Why does it have to be me? Isn’t there Salvatore Licitra who is at an appropriate age and is the best tenor?”

Argento slowly enjoyed a glass of wine as they exchanged greetings before he asked in a straightforward manner.

“You’re still vigorous. There are 3 acts but young Vito Corleone comes out in the 1st, so you’ll be able to handle it.”

“I don’t know if you know, but I can’t even do a C5 (3 octave, high C) right now.”

“That is one of the biggest reasons why I want to work with you.”

"What? Well, ha ha. You've come determined."

Argento laughed good naturedly. It is the work that is currently receiving the most attention, and the fact that the musician at the center of it all wants him helps to momentarily get rid of the sadness of growing older.

"No. It's not just something I'm saying. A singer who does a high C perfectly needs to take the role of the son. I want a treble that feels like it is worn out. It's the last flame."

Argento drank the last of his wine and stared at his empty glass for a while. He spoke again when there was an awkward silence and it was about to become uncomfortable.

"You... Did you notice?"

"Yes. I realized after I heard you in the London charity concert in the Spring. There's someone wrong with your throat, right?"

"From hearing that?"

Argento almost dropped his wine glass.

"Did you get surgery?"

"Last year. It wasn't a big procedure."

Dario Argento's dropped voice showed his feelings.

"I see. That's why your voice changed."

"I'm surprised. This is something that only my family and the hospital know."

"I wouldn't have noticed either if you had an average voice. I was able to catch that subtle difference because your voice is so delicate and it has strong character."

Argento filled his glass and buried his body deep in the sofa.

"I need to retire now. Singing lightly at a charity concert is okay, but it's possible for me to sing passionately in an opera."

"I'm sorry, but what exactly does impossible mean? Does it mean you can't sing at all?"

Or does it mean that your voice isn't smooth?"

Jun Hyuk did not mind at all even though Argento said that it is impossible.

"It's closer to the latter. As I go higher, I'm sure my voice will crack."

"So... it doesn't mean that your life would be at stake or there would be damage to your vocal chords if you sing too much in an opera... right?"

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Argento was in disbelief when he saw Jun Hyuk laughing in jest.

“You’re... cruel. Do you really want to show my damaged image to my fans?”

“Of course not. Damaged? I think of it as the opposite. The cracking is the sound that I and the opera needs. If you still had the sweet voice from the past, I wouldn’t have come all the way here. You’ll be able to express the exact sound that I want.”

“What sound are you talking about?”

“I’m not making an opera where beautiful arias flow out. There are countless works like that. I’m going to make an opera where the characters, singing, and voice match up perfectly.”

Argento felt passion in Jun Hyuk’s expression.

“A sweet voice for an aged big boss? Isn’t that funny? This protagonist isn’t a handsome prince or a king ruling a single country. He is an old man who has been shot before and always has death beside him. A person like that with a beautiful voice?”

Argento could not drink his wine and got lost in Jun Hyuk’s passionate words.

“A young Corleone who sings in a cool manner will fill the 1st act. The sound that is necessary in the 2nd act where we can feel the flow of time is you, Mr. Argento.”

Argento started as the tenor in the Alfredo role of Verdi’s ‘La Traviata’. The powerful, beautiful, and grand voice that had touched the audience at the time is changing into the cracking voice of an old man in his last work.

It is as though he is revealing to everyone that his life is in decline.

“You would be facing death in your last work. Is there a better exit than this? Are you going to disappear after performing lightly at charity concerts like you’re doing now?”

Argento had gladly accepted meeting with Jun Hyuk because he wanted to see the

genius that the world was abuzz about, but also to give a mild refusal.

However, could it have been a desire hidden deep within him to find a reason to stand on the stage with this opera?

Jun Hyuk did not pay mind to Argento's complicated thoughts and bolted up from the sofa, holding a stack of scores out to him.

"It is the aria that Vito Corleone needs to sing. If you look at it, you'll want to stand on the stage. I'll be waiting at the hotel. Just give me a call."

Jun Hyuk put the score on top of the table and left the living room, leaving his last words,

"Oh right, Mr. Argento. I can keep a secret. I won't tell anyone that you got a procedure done."

Argento kept looking at the score even after Jun Hyuk left. After staring blankly for a while, he picked up the score instead of the wine glass.

'Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer'

'An offer you can't refuse'

The song titles are Vito Corleone's most famous lines. Argento started to read through the sheets slowly.

President Stern was waiting anxiously for Jun Hyuk at the hotel. He felt better when he saw Jun Hyuk come in smiling.

"How did it go? Did he accept?"

"No, not yet. But he will. I left the aria score with him. If he sees that and rejects it, he's done as a singer. We'll have to look for someone else."

He gains more confidence over time. He means that he gave Argento music that he cannot reject, not an offer that he cannot reject.

"How long are you going to wait?"

“Just until check out tomorrow.”

“Who’s next if he turns us down?”

Jun Hyuk said a few names and President Stern made the order to check on their schedules.

“Alright, then shall we enjoy this sweltering heat until tomorrow? Let’s look out at the Mediterranean and watch beautiful women on the beach.”

President Stern dragged Jun Hyuk to the beach where he laid under a parasol and drank a refreshing drink.

But unlike Stern who was happy, Jun Hyuk could not get rid of his weighted expression.

“What? Because Argento might turn you down?”

“No. Because of the other roles.....”

Jun Hyuk did not seem to think that Argento might refuse.

President Stern saw this and spoke nonchalantly. He knows what Jun Hyuk’s heavy expression means.

“Jun. Don’t think more about it and ask for help.”

“Excuse me? Who?”

“Who else? Laura.”

“Oh, Laura Goldberg?”

“Yeah. It’s a supporting role, but it leaves an impact, doesn’t it? It’ll become the top aria of this opera? With something like that, Laura will do you this favor.”

He hesitated several times, but he could not get himself to contact her. She is already rising rapidly as a star. Her name has gotten too big for her to take on a supporting role.

“She didn’t even apply for the audition. I’m sure that’s how busy she is.”

"No. She could have not participated because there isn't an appropriate role and she could have thought that you would contact her first if you needed her. She could even be disappointed that you didn't call her."

President Stern took his cellphone out and gave his employee another order.

"I'll ask her to contact you, so wait. If she calls today, it means she's been waiting for your call."

President Stern was positive that Laura would call, and started looking at women in bikinis again.

The phone in the hotel room started ringing as it neared midnight.

"Jun? Wow. I was really surprised that you called me first."

"How are you?"

She called that day. Had she really been waiting for him to contact her?

"Oh, I'm in the middle of an opera in London. Once the London show is over, I have a solo concert in Frankfurt."

Since releasing an album with Jun Hyuk, Laura is considered the most powerful rookie soprano and is ranked at the top of casting.

When he heard how busy she is, he could not get himself to bring up his opera. How could he ask her to take on a supporting role when she is someone who needs to be doing solo concerts?

While Jun Hyuk hesitated, Laura became frustrated and spoke up first.

"What is it? Didn't you leave a message to call you because you have something to say to me? I'm sure you didn't call to ask how I'm doing."

Laura knows that Jun Hyuk does not have the personality to call just to ask how she is. She thanked him many times because he basically brought her success, but he had only ever responded gruffly.

"It's just hard to say because it's a bit of an unreasonable request. Your schedule is so

full.....”

“It’s okay. Tell me. Didn’t you call because of the opera?”

He felt much lighter because of what Laura said.

“Do you want to audition at all? No... There’s no reason to audition.”

“I want to, but how could I reach out first? All sopranos around the world are going out. I assumed there wasn’t a right role for me because you weren’t calling me.”

“Honestly, it’s almost all filled up. There’s one role, but it’s a supporting role.”

“Supporting role? Is it the chorus.....”

“Oh, no. Would I have called you to join the chorus?”

Jun Hyuk rushed to explain the role to her. He told her how important it is although it is a supporting role.

“Let me know once the show schedule comes out. And send me the score right now.”

She blurted out her response without even the slightest hesitation.

“What? You’re accepting?”

“Of course. Did you think I would turn it down because it’s a small role? Who was it who helped me get here? I always repay my debts. And I’m telling you in advance that it’ll be the same going forward. Tell me any time, no matter how small the supporting role is. If you call, I’ll go.”

Jun Hyuk ended the call and felt he had let go one of his big worries.

‘She’s more loyal than she seems.’



“How much time is there for me to practice on my own?”

“Excuse me?”

“How much time is there left until rehearsals?”

“There is about 2 months.”

When Jun Hyuk picked up the ringing phone early in the morning, Argento's questions poured through.

“Fine. Then will you be able to direct for me for 2 months? At my house?”

Jun Hyuk bolted up from his bed and adjusted the phone.

“Of course. That's actually what I wanted to ask of you.”

“What? Well, it seems like you're really out to get me. Ha ha.”

Jun Hyuk went to check on his schedule with President Stern.

“2 months is too much. You can't just cling to Argento. Starting in a month, you need to check on everything including from the singers, stage sets, to the lights. You'll be so busy you won't even have time to lift your head. End it in a month.”

“I see. Then I'll spend that time at the least at Argento's house.”

President Stern went through his entire schedule and stated firmly that he cannot stay with Argento for more than 1 month.

“We're almost done working on the songs, so it'll be enough time for the cast to practice on their own.”

Jun Hyuk packed a bag that day and went into Argento's mansion.

After spending just 1 day with Jun Hyuk, Argento began exercising again. He realized right away that this young composer would push his limits to get what he wants. And those limits were only getting higher.



After 1 month, the major cast and officials for the Godfather opera gathered in Milan, and the stage in La Scala Teatro was full of advanced equipment.

La Scala Teatro was remodeled under Toscanini's direction in March of 1946 and there is an orchestra that is well-tuned to Toscanini.

They had the most rigorous conductor they met since Toscanini, and was not able to spend a single day comfortably.

How long has it been since there has been a premiere at La Scala?

Everyone memorized and practiced the scores that they were seeing for the first time, but Jun Hyuk, the young composer and conductor, did not seem to know satisfaction.

They thought the opera would have the feeling of the movie because they heard that the movie's main theme song would be used, but the movie theme song was just an intermezzo.

The opera Godfather is a true Italian opera that expresses the tragic beauty of death.



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